



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

39-

531.

THE
ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

BY

MISS PARDOE,

AUTHOR OF "THE CITY OF THE SULTAN,"

"THE RIVER AND THE DESART," &c.

"Mid many things most new to ear and eye,
The pilgrim rested here his weary feet,
And gazed around on Moslem luxury."

BYRON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1839.

531.

LONDON:
P. SHOBELL, JUN., 51, RUPERT STREET, HAYMARKET.

P R E F A C E.

The flattering success of my late work on Turkey has induced me to offer to the Public the present collection of Oriental Fictions; which are genuine tales related by the professional *Messaldjies*, or Story-tellers of the East, in the Harems of the wealthy Turks during seasons of festivity, and particularly in that of the Ramazan. In the selection which I have made, I have, throughout the whole work, carefully avoided the supernatural, save in one solitary instance, where the allegory was so talented and tempting that I felt it would require no apology with any class of readers;

preferring, in every other case, a life-like and probable chain of circumstances, to a brilliant and impossible picture. Hence my fictions neither borrow power from the Genii, terror from the Ghouls, nor grace and beauty from the Peris; they treat only of ordinary men and women; but individuals placed in positions, and actuated by feelings, almost unknown in Europe.

In order to localise the different tales, I have endeavoured to adopt to a certain degree the florid and figurative style of language in which the Orientals so much delight, and so constantly indulge; while I have been careful neither to caricature their habits nor their opinions; but to confine myself as closely as possible to the actions and feelings of every-day Turkish life; and to fling off, if I may so express it, all idea of authorship, to identify myself for the time with the individuals of whom I wrote.

How far I may have succeeded in my attempt to follow up, through the medium of these fic-

PREFACE.

v

tions, my former task of delineating Turkish manners, it is not for me to determine; but I put them forth in the full confidence that those readers to whom the usages of the East are familiar, will admit the fidelity of the pictures; and in the hope that those to whom they are comparatively unknown, will find sufficient attraction in their novelty and peculiarity, to carry them pleasantly through the volumes.

Bradenham Lodge,
Jan. 1838.

CONTENTS
OF
THE FIRST VOLUME.

	PAGE
Part the First	1
The Diamond Merchant	24
Part the Second	110
The Seven Doors	132
Part the Third	269
The Tatar's Tale	287

THE
ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

CARIMFIL HANOUN, the beautiful young wife of Saïfula Pasha, was sick even unto death; and her husband, who loved her tenderly, became well nigh maddened by grief. Long had the malady hung upon her; and her diamond eyes were languid, and her small hands so weak and wasted as to leave her scarcely strength sufficient to lift her feather fan, or to attach the jewels to her turban.

What was to be done? It signifies not of what province Saïfula Pasha was Governor; suffice it, that it was so far distant from Constan-

2 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

tinople, and so little visited by the wandering giaours, who of late years have overrun the East, that there was no hope of obtaining the advice of a Frank Hakeem, or doctor, who would, as a matter of course, have cured the Hanoum on his first visit ; and the wise men and the wise women of the province had long fairly given up the case as desperate.

As time wore on, things grew worse and worse : and the Pasha waxed more moody and melancholy. The Hanoum, wearied alike of her diamonds, her birds, her slaves, and her husband, sighed for some new and hitherto untasted pleasure ; but how was this to be procured ? Her apartments had long been filled with the rarest flowers, and her languid palate tempted by the choicest fruits. Every satellite of the Pasha (and they were many !) lost himself in efforts to gratify her fancies ; and still there was no satisfying them.

Carimfil Hanoum was a Circassian, lovely as a houri, and quite conscious of her power over the Pasha ; gorgeous in her beauty, as the tulip after which she had been named ; and capricious

enough to have supplied all the harem of the Grand Seigniour with whims. Some of her women even went so far as to say that their fair mistress affected more indisposition than she felt, in order to satisfy her love of power and change ; and certain it is, that if the little beauty possessed the tact to do this, it completely answered her hopes, for the more exacting she became, the more the Pasha appeared to hang upon her smiles.

After this explanation of the state of affairs in the palace of the Pashalik, it may be believed with what delight the intelligence was received that a travelling slave-merchant on his way to Stamboul had halted in the city ; and that among his slaves there was a Greek girl of incomparable beauty and great talent, whom he hoped to sell to the Sultan.

The Satrap,* preceded by two kavasses,† and followed by four of his chaoushes,‡ threw a purse to the pipe-bearer who brought him the news ; and, thrusting his feet into his slippers,

* Governor of a Province.

† Police.

‡ Officers.

too anxious to entrust the mission to an officer of his household, he hastened to the caravanserai, which was the temporary abode of the merchant Tahiz. An idea had instantly suggested itself, which he determined to realize. What were a few thousand piastres when put in competition with the happiness of his adored Carimfil? He would purchase this wonderful slave, and her talents should serve to beguile the ennui of his beautiful young wife.

The merchant prostrated himself to the earth as the shadow of the Pasha fell across his threshold; what evil might not this unexpected visit portend to his fortunes? But he was soon reassured by the bland “Khosh Buldûk — well found,” which met his ear; and, after having traversed the floor on his knees to the feet of his visiter, and pressed the hem of his garment to his lips and brow, he meekly crossed his hands upon his breast, and ventured to raise his eyes.

“ You have with you slaves of price, is it not so?” asked the Pasha, as he took possession of the low sofa.

“ It is so, my lord;” was the reply.

“ Whence are they? and are there any among them who are worthy that I should look upon them ?”

“ What shall I say to my lord? They are from many lands, and some of them are worthy even of his gracious notice, which will be to them as a light from Paradise.”

“ I will see them,” said Saïfula Pasha, as his chibouque-bearer knelt and presented to him his costly pipe of cherry wood lipped with amber; while his cafèghe approached with the tiny cup of porcelain, in its fillagree stand, redolent of the perfumed mocha : “ I will see them—if I may find pleasure in looking on them, Allah bilir—Allah only knows. Bakalum — we shall see.”

“ Bashustun—on my head be it!” replied the merchant, as he performed the graceful salām aleikum,* and left the apartment.

One by one the veiled beauties were led to the presence of the Satrap. There were gorgeous Georgians, with their large, deep, flashing eyes, and their sparkling teeth, their finely-moulded

* Eastern salutation.

6 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

figures, and jetty hair ; languid Circassians, with their dreamy, dove-like glances, their snowy skins, and their exquisitely rounded limbs ; and beauties from the Islands, with their languishing listless grace, and sweetly-toned voices. But the fair Greek girl did not appear ; and as the last of the bright train withdrew, and the merchant again prostrated himself before the Pasha, he asked calmly—“Are there no more ?”

“None, may it please my lord. Evallah ! there are a few Kurdish women, but they are bosh—nothing.”

“Kiupek—dog !” said the Satrap sternly : “Do you lie to my beard ! Where is the young Greek whom you have held back ?”

The affrighted merchant bent his head to the earth : “Surely my lord jests with his slave—the girl is a giaour—an infidel—a haremzadeh—an ill-born. Nothing, and less than nothing.”

“Ouf ! ouf !—peace, peace !” said the Pasha, impatiently, “or your head shall answer for your presumption. Is it for you, and such as you, to decide upon my pleasure ? Tchapouk

—quick—bring hither the young Greek, or the bowstring shall give your slaves a new master.”

“Astaferallah — Heaven forbid !” faltered out the merchant: “will my lord hear his servant? The young giaour has already been seen by a Yuzbashi—a captain of soldiers, who is now on his way to the capital, and who has promised to talk of her to the Kislar Agha* of the Sultan, (whom may Allah prosper!) How, then, can the slave of my lord, who is but as a dog in his sight, dispose of this Greek woman until he has learnt the pleasure of the Padishah ?”†

“Kelb—cur !” exclaimed the Pasha, enraged at this new difficulty ; “do you dare to eat dirt; and to pour out your words, as though they were the words of wisdom, when they are but the promptings of Sheitan, and the instigations of the Evil One? I spit upon the grave of your father, and blacken the face of your mother! Who am I that I should listen to you, when my foot is on your head? Bak—see! the slave is mine, and the gold is ready—bring her hither

* Chief of the Eunuchs.

† Sovereign.

8 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

with speed ; or, by the beard of the Prophet,
your neck shall be fitted with a bowstring !”

“ Allah buyûk der — Allah is great !” murmured the merchant, as he prepared to obey ;
“ Who can withstand his fate !”

During the brief interval that ensued, the Pasha smoked on in silence ; his curiosity was aroused, and his anger excited ; and yet he enjoyed the scene, for it had afforded him a new sensation, and restrung his nerves, which had latterly been terribly shattered by his anxiety for Carimfil Hanoum. Thus he was in no ungracious mood, when, with much parade, and with a most unwilling expression of countenance, the merchant slowly returned, leading in a figure ostentatiously muffled in close and heavy drapery.

“ Ey vah ! this pearl beyond price is at least well guarded ;” said the Pasha, endeavouring to conceal his interest beneath an affectation of scorn ; “ but we waste time ; and I have occupation of more moment than sitting to witness the unveiling of a woman.”

“ Sen ektiar der — you are the master ;” re-

plied the merchant, as he cast aside the mantle of the female: "be it as my lord wills."

For a moment the Pasha was silent; for it was truly a vision of surpassing beauty which had been so suddenly revealed to him. The fair Greek was scarcely sixteen years of age, slight as a willow wand, and graceful as an antelope. The bewildered Saifula Pasha had never beheld such eyes, save in his dreams; and then only when he had dreamt of paradise. Of the deepest blue that had ever caught their dye from heaven, they were fringed with lashes as black as night; and the long silky hair, which fell in a score of rich braids about her ivory shoulders, was of the same hue. Her slight figure was habited in a tight jacket of emerald-coloured velvet, laced with gold; and the cymar that veiled her throat was white as the bosom upon which it rested. Her small feet were partially covered with embroidered slippers of crimson, sprinkled with small pearls; and the short full petticoat of white linen revealed an ankle of exquisite symmetry.

The Pasha drew a long breath. What, indeed,

was gold, when weighed against a houri like this? But he did not, in that moment, think of the beautiful Carimfil—his idolized wife! “And her price is—what?” was his first question.

“How shall I answer my lord?” said the merchant, warily. “The slave is his.”

“Chok chay—that is much;” smiled the Pasha, as he removed the chibouque from his mouth, and threw out a slender thread of smoke: “but the piastres are ready — how far shall they be counted?”

“The slave plays on the zebec, and sings the songs of her own land;” was the reply: “nay, should my lord care to listen, she can tell tales like a massaldjhe.”*

“Allah kerim—Allah be praised!” ejaculated the Pasha, as, for the first time since the veil of the slave had been withdrawn, his thoughts were forced back to his absent beauty; “the Prophet has heard my prayer. Once more I tell you to name your price, and that the slave is mine.”

“Ne bilirim — what can I say?” replied the merchant meekly; “I have given much for her

* Professional story-teller.

—ajaib der—she is a wonder! She speaks Turkish like a daughter of paradise ; and her voice is as the voice of the bulbul in the gardens of Nishapoor."

" Mashallah ! there has been enough, and too much of this ; " impatiently broke in the Pasha : " for the last time, what ask you for the girl ? "

The merchant cast down his eyes, and hesitated for a moment ; but he had been shrewd enough to detect the effect which the extreme beauty of the maiden had produced upon the Pasha ; and he consequently summoned courage to name a price which he could never hope to obtain, under other circumstances.

" Y' Allah—in the name of the Prophet, that is much ! " said the startled Pasha ; " Fifty thousand piastres ! A hundred purses ! Lives there a woman between Stamboul and Paradise, who is worth a hundred purses ? "

The merchant was silent.

" Give him sixty thousand, and bring hither the araba to convey the slave to my harem ; " pursued the Pasha, turning to his principal

12 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

chaoush ; and, as the officer withdrew, he shuffled off the sofa, resumed his slippers, and, passing the prostrate merchant without a glance, slowly walked out of the caravanserai.

CHAPTER II.

THE most difficult portion of the arrangement was yet to be accomplished; for the Pasha could not conceal from himself that it was just possible that the beautiful Carimfil might not altogether approve of the means which he had now adopted for her gratification; and he therefore resolved to take her by surprise, and to regale her with the vaunted minstrelsy of the fair slave, before she was introduced into her presence.

The morning meal had accordingly scarcely terminated on the morrow, ere the Pasha found it necessary to summon the young Greek, who had been kept carefully concealed, in order that he might explain to her the suffering state of her new mistress, and his own anxiety for her amusement. She entered slowly, and with her white arms folded

14 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

meekly upon her bosom : her eyes were heavy, and the Pasha saw that she had been weeping. The languor of grief added a new charm to her beauty ; and as she bent her forehead to the earth on the threshold of the chamber, the Satrap welcomed her with a gentle “ Khosh geldin—you are welcome.”

Her prostration performed, the slave stood with bent head, one pace within the room, and awaited the orders of the Pasha.

“ Korkma—fear not ;” was his next address ; “ your home beneath my roof shall be a happy one. How are you called ? ”

“ Katinka,” murmured out a low soft voice.

“ Nay, nay,” said the Satrap gaily ; “ your’s is but an infidel name for such a houri. How say you? shall we call you Bèyaz ? * ‘ Tis a more fitting appellation for such a lily ! ”

“ Sen ektiar der, agam — you are the master, my lord,” was the reply.

“ Bèyaz be it then,” pursued the Pasha : “ and now, hear me. Your talents have been extolled, and I doubt not that they are worthy

* White.

of all the praise which has been lavished on them. I have a fair wife, beautiful enough to have been the daughter of a peri, and born of a sunbeam, but she languishes beneath a cruel malady, and we cannot restore to her eyes the light that has fled from them. Be this task your's; it will require a gentle hand, and a bright spirit."

" My heart will be in the task ;" said the fair Greek softly, " even now I am ready."

" Taib, janum—well said, my soul!" exclaimed the Pasha ; " you shall be the hakeem, to whom she will owe her recovered bloom, and to whom I shall be indebted for a renewal of the happiness to which I have long been a stranger. Khosh geldin—you are welcome, fair Bèyaz, to the harem of Saïfula Pasha."

" And how wills my lord that I should enter upon my office ?" demanded Katinka, somewhat hastily : " shall I take my zebec, and sing to the Hanoum Effendi one of our mountain melodies ?"

" That were well done," said the Satrap ; " but I would not that she should see the minstrel while she listens to her voice : that were too

16 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

much!" and the Pasha looked patronizingly, and almost tenderly, towards the young Greek. But the glance fell like a sunbeam upon marble —the maiden did not raise her eyes ; and, after a short silence, she asked humbly—

" What wills my lord that I should sing ? Shall the strain be sad, like the heart of the beautiful listener ; or joyous as the mood in which he loves to see her ?"

" Be it even as you will ;" said the Pasha ; and clapping his hands, he gave orders to an attendant that Katinka should be conducted to an apartment contiguous to that inhabited by the Buyūk Hanoum, where she could be heard unseen.

This command uttered, the slave awaited no further bidding to withdraw ; but, once more prostrating herself, she performed her salām aleikum, and followed the attendant from the apartment.

Carimfil Hanoum sat moodily on her sofa, heedless of the efforts of her maidens to arouse her from her reverie. She had cast aside her costly tusbee* of gems, and flung her feather-

* Rosary.

framed anali * from her in disgust. Costly perfumes were burning in a vase of silver on a small table near her, and at intervals she passed her hand through the scented vapour as if unconsciously. Jewels of price were scattered over her cushions, and a few flowers were strown among them; but they were alike unheeded.

Yet it seemed not like the languor of disease which weighed her down; but rather bore the character of deep and settled melancholy, fed by regretful thought.

Suddenly she raised her head, as a low strain of music broke upon her ear: it was a wild gushing melody, half hope, half sadness; and, by whatever spell it wrought, it fastened at once upon the spirit of the fair Carimfil Hanoum, who sat entranced among her cushions, and listened breathlessly even to its close.

SONG OF THE GREEK SLAVE.

Joy is a bird!
Catch it as it springs;
It will return no more
When once it spreads its wings.

* Hand-mirror.

Its song is gay, but brief,
The voice of sunny weather;
But ah ! the bird and leaf
Vanish both together !

Joy is a flower !
Pluck it in its bloom ;
'Twill close its petals up
If darker skies should gloom.
It is a lovely thing,
And formed for sunny weather;
But ah ! the flower and spring
Vanish both together !

Joy is a child !
Seize it in its mirth ;
For soon its lip will know
The withering taint of earth.
Its eye is bright as truth,
A type of sunny weather ;
But ah ! the smile and youth
Vanish both together !

The song ceased, but for a long interval the beautiful Circassian remained motionless. The strain had evidently awakened memories which she sought not to dispel ; and, when at length a deep sigh relieved her overcharged heart, she impatiently commanded that the invisible musician should be brought before her.

At her desire the curtain of tapestry was raised, and the Greek girl stood on the threshold with her zebec in her hand.

“Ajaib — wonderful!” broke from the lips of both, as they gazed earnestly on each other; and Katinka had bounded half way across the floor, and the wife of the Pasha had sprung from her sofa, ere the slave remembered that she who had once been her friend had now become her mistress; and she stopped suddenly with the indignant blood mantling her brow, and would have turned aside, but the delighted young Hanoum caught her to her heart.

“Sister of my soul!” she murmured, as the first rush of joyful surprise was succeeded by a calmer and more assured delight: “Whence come you? Welcome are you, as the first roses that gem the gardens of the peris—dear have you ever been, as the memory of the loved and lost!”

“I come from your own fair land — from the mountains where we were wont to wander together;” was the reply: “but when you were gone the flowers of the valley hung their heads; and the wind on the hill-tops murinured only sadness.

20 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

But I have found you once more, and the sorrows that have fallen upon me since we parted are forgotten."

"One of them at least is overpast;" hastily interposed the Circassian : " from this hour, beloved of my spirit, you are free." And as she spoke she led the maiden to the sofa, and seated her by her side.

The news soon reached the Pasha that, in the person of the Greek slave, his wife had found a long-lost friend ; and he learnt the fact with a bewilderment of feeling which he did not seek to analyse ; but when he again visited the beautiful Hanoum, and saw that the light danced in her eye, and that her lip was wreathed with smiles, he almost persuaded himself that he was satisfied with the event.

Had the worthy Satrap been more conversant with the mysteries of a woman's heart, he might perchance have suspected that even the meeting with one whom she had loved in her own land with the love of a sister, would be insufficient to produce so sudden and so great a change in the temper of his wife ; but Saïfula Pasha was no

wizard in the lore of love ; the effect delighted him ; and, sensible as he himself was to the beauty of the fair Greek, he looked no deeper for the cause, but smoked the chibouque of content, and occupied the divan of justice, as well satisfied with himself and all that appertained to him, as though neither mystery nor jealousy existed in the world.

It was on a fair evening in summer that the two friends sat together, conversing in low whispers of past years and vanished happiness. The draperies of the portal were drawn back ; and beyond the threshold of the apartment stretched away the garden and groves of the palace, far as the eye could reach. Fountains of delicate white marble threw their sparkling waters into the air; and, as the volume descended, touched by the colours of the setting sun, it fell back upon the lotus blossoms in the basin like a tide of gems. Birds of gorgeous plumage were suspended in golden cages from the branches of the tall trees, or wandered among the rainbow-tinted flowers ; while the sweet breath of the lime-buds and the Persian jasmine came soothingly upon the wind.

It was a lovely hour; but there was a saddening influence in its luxurious calm which the fair Circassian felt in every pulse; tears stood in her deep eyes; and the unbidden sigh rose at intervals, as if to rebuke the effort which she made to smile.

The gentle Greek gazed fondly on her for a moment; and then, flinging her white arms about her neck, she said playfully—

“Ai, guzum—my eyes! when Saïfula Pasha paid sixty purses for a certain slave whom he purchased not many months back, it was in the hope that she might be able to while his wayward wife from her sadness. How say you? shall we try her skill? My first tale I have told you, as the rose avows her love to the bulbul, in secret—the rest may be more openly delivered—the Prophet grant that, like the bulbul’s answer to his blossom-love, they may be sweet, even although perchance somewhat sad. Speak, Effendimou—my mistress, shall it be so?”

“Janum—my soul!” answered her companion; “I live but to listen.” And, having placed herself more commodiously among her

cushions, and possessed herself of the fair hand which was wandering lovingly among her tresses, the Pasha's wife, surrounded by her slaves, prepared to hearken to the tale of her new-found friend.

The Greek remained silent for a moment, with her open palm pressed upon her brow in deep thought; and then, suddenly smiling upon the young beauty at her side, she struck a few notes upon her zebec, and commenced her narrative.

CHAPTER III.

THE DIAMOND MERCHANT.

IN the reign of Sultan Mourad the Second, there dwelt in Stamboul a young man whose name was Hassan. His father, who had been a merchant of some reputation, died while his son was yet a child ; and his mother had lived through the subsequent years of her widowhood without an interest or an affection which did not centre in her boy. Well had the youth repaid the loving care of his last parent ; and often did the aged Yusnu-gul bless the Prophet who had spared such a treasure to her grey hairs.

Hassan Effendi was ardent, imaginative, and high-hearted, and was as remarkable for his moral qualities as for his personal attractions.

As he is the hero of my story, I must be excused if I attempt his description ; and I will give it in as few words as possible. To a stature so lofty that, had it not been tempered by extreme grace, it might have been considered almost as a defect, he united the advantages of a noble expression of countenance, and features of the most classical beauty. His dark eyes had a depth whence, in moments of excitement, the living fire flashed forth with meteoric brilliancy ; and his lip had that curve of mingled scorn and softness which betrays the workings of the spirit without the aid of words. The turban never bound a nobler brow than that of Hassan Ef-fendi ; nor was the girdle of cachemire ever folded above a more generous heart.

Constituted as I have here described him, it will not be matter of surprise to any that Hassan created for himself a surpassing interest in the breast of the Defter-dar, or Treasurer to the Crown, who soon felt for the young man the affection of a father. His love was gratefully returned ; and it was the more valuable to Hassan because he had never known a father's fondness.

26 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

To the affection of a son he added the reverence of a protégé, and thus deepened the feeling which shed a glow of happiness over his existence ; while his brightest moments, despite his youth and his enthusiasm, were spent in the society of his powerful and partial friend.

Thus were things situated, when one of those diplomatic avalanches, which descend no where so suddenly nor so fatally as in the East, overwhelmed the Defter-dar, and he found himself dispossessed of all his honours at a period when they had become habitual to him. Nor was his interest at court the only loss which accompanied his dismissal from office—true, his fortune, which was ample, remained intact and uninjured by the hand of power ; he was still surrounded by luxury and indulgence ; but his antechamber was no longer thronged with those troops of friends who had been wont to crowd it, and whose attendance had ever been considered overpaid by his smiles : he awoke on the morrow after his dismissal, wearied by a night of fitful and uneasy dreams, only to find himself alone.

There is something strange and startling to one who has been accustomed to a bevy of adulators—to a herd of suppliants—to a throng of obsequious sycophants—in finding his altar suddenly abandoned by the incense-breathing worshippers who were wont to encircle it; and thus felt the Defter-dar. He wandered listlessly and sadly through his spacious apartments; he laid his pipe aside, and left his coffee untasted; and, after a while, he passed into the harem; but even the smiles of Nefzi-Sabah, his wife, failed to awaken him to joy. And yet she was the wife of only a few short months, and beautiful as a houri. Gentle as the “Morning Zephyr,” whose name she bore, dark-eyed as the gazelle, and graceful as a fawn, Nefzi-Sabah found the spell of her loveliness for the first time powerless.

As she flung herself upon a pile of cushions beside the sofa of the Defter-dar, and looked up tenderly in his face, a coldness fell upon her heart, and she remained for a while silent; yet even that availed her nothing, for her silence passed unheeded; no fond gaze lin-

gered upon her beauty ; and a tinge of bitter and regretful surprise mingled with the sigh that heaved her bosom, as she stretched her jewelled hand towards her zebec, and swept the cords with fingers as light as the breath of evening among roses.

The spirit of the Defter-dar was softened by the strain, and he sighed in his turn ; but, alas ! the sigh was not for Nefzi-Sabah ; for, as his troubled thoughts resolved themselves into calm, he remembered Hassan ; and, while the beautiful Circassian was breathing out a lay of love, he was mentally expatiating on the delights of friendship.

“ Of what avail,” he asked himself, “ have been the toils and the intrigues of years ? Of what value have been the false vows of the time-serving herd who have followed in my path ? The toils have withered me—the intrigues have blighted me—the flatterers have proved false—the gaud and the glitter of court favour were the sunlight in which they basked, and they have no time to shiver in the shade of disappointment. Now is the moment to revenge myself on fate,

and to make the lure of ambition yield to the calm impulse of friendship. I am no longer the favourite of Mourad, but I am still the friend of Hassan ; and what is the possession of power compared to that of one honest heart ? When the storm rages, the surf is scattered upon the shore; but the jewel which is hidden in the depths of ocean is unmoved by the tumult of the bil-lows."

With this consolatory reflection the Defter-dar concluded his reverie ; and, as the smile of recovered complacency rose to his lip, Nefzi-Sabah ceased her song, and smiled in her turn at the success of her fond experiment.

Nor was the stoical composure of the ex-courtier subject of surprise to those around him. Every Turk is aware that the same hand which beckons him to a Pashalik can also twine the bowstring about his neck ; and he accepts the one with as much outward composure as he submits to the other. Even beggary, suddenly as it may come upon him, fails to wring a murmur from his lips. He looks upon worldly advancement and worldly possessions as mere

transitory benefits, and the grave as the great and certain end of all ; and, unlike the theoretical European, who, admitting the same belief, nevertheless acts as though they were the supreme good — the Alpha and Omega of all created beings—the Musselmaun, instead of terminating his reverses with a pistol or a razor, or supporting them at best with a dogged and sullen despair which places him beyond the pale of future exertion, and atrophises the energies of all who are dependent on him, calmly resigns himself to a fate which he had not power to control, and makes the best of that which still remains. The Defter-dar was wealthy ; he yet possessed the means of tranquil, and even costly enjoyment ; the substance was untouched, it was the shadow only which had passed away ; and, under such circumstances, no Turk would arrogate to himself the right of complaint ; or deem that he could be an object of commisera-
tion.

It was a time of festival, the Ramazan was waning to a close — the morrow was the feast of the Baïram ; and the Defter-dar ere long quitted

the women's apartments, in order to prepare the presents which, at this period, it is customary to distribute among the members of the household.

As the ex-courtier turned a hasty glance on the many gifts that lay around him, each enveloped in the boksha or handkerchief in which the offering is made, he could not repress the rising scorn which grew out of the memory of past years, and the conviction that the link that now united him to those who were about to share his bounty, was one of interest, not love. But the feeling passed away, as his eye lingered on the costly gifts prepared for Hassan ; and, with unwonted earnestness, he once more unfolded the boksha to assure himself that the present was worthy of his love.

A shawl from the looms of Cachemire, whose price would have ransomed a province, concealed amid its folds a Damascus dagger, and a pair of diamond studded pistols ; and, as the Defter-dar replaced the weapons, and refolded the handkerchief, he put into the hands of a trusty slave the precious offering of friendship,

and turned away with a calm brow and a cheerful spirit.

But the cup of disappointment was not yet drained to the dregs, and the Defter-dar was fated to imbibe the draught even to the last drop.

Eager to expedite the work of bounty, the slave loaded himself with as many packages as he could conveniently carry, and hastened on his errand. Numerous were the greetings which awaited him as he passed on; and each chance-passenger whom he encountered on his way grasped his hand in fellowship and congratulation, as is customary at this solemn feast; cannon boomed along the Bosphorus; the distant sound of music came upon the wind; and the good Musselmaun, excited and preoccupied, hastily placed in the possession of one of the impatient expectants the sumptuous gift destined for Hassan; and then unconsciously pursued his way to the dwelling of the young Effendi.

Hassan, meanwhile, suffered far more at the misfortunes of his friend than the Defter-dar himself. The ex-courtier was no longer in the

first rush of youth ; he had attained the age when, despite all circumstances, a certain degree of philosophy is forced upon every man. He had sufficient experience to perceive and to appreciate the hollowness and uncertainty of worldly honours, and a mind energetic enough to turn to nobler means of consolation. But Hassan was yet in the fresh years when the dew of hope falls plentifully on the wayside of existence, and calls up a thousand bright tints from the wilding flowers which blossom there. He had not yet learnt the useful and care-taught lesson of self-examination and self-government. He could not comprehend the possibility of casting aside worldly distinctions, and replacing their glitter by the more social possessions of fellowship and regard. He had ever looked upon the Defter-dar as upon one born to authority and trust ; and he could not, in the first rush of feeling, disentangle those attributes which had so long been blent in his imagination. To say that he pitied the individual were an error—he only mourned the evil ; for he regarded his friend with the same

honouring eyes as when he moved in pride and power. "The sun," said Hassan, in reply to some observation of Yusnu-gul, his mother ; "is still the sun, though clouds may have passed before it. Who shall dare to lift an irreverent look to the glorious orb, or to deride its want of light, because the vapours of the morning have overshadowed it ?"

"The Defter-dar," retorted the aged woman, as she resumed her pipe, and deposited beside her cushions the bag of embroidered cachemire containing the scented tobacco with which she had just replenished it ; "the Defter-dar has still the heart and the hand of a prince ; and fear not——"

"What should I fear?" exclaimed Hassan, his dark eyes flashing scorn at the inference of his more worldly-minded mother ; "Mashallah ! have I loved him only for the riches with which he has loaded me ? Have I been bought at a price ? Do not even *you* know me better ? I tell you, mother, that the world holds not the being who shall ever rend away my heart from the Defter-dar ; he has been a father to me in

affection, a friend in trust, a protector in munificence. *He* only can undo the work of his own kindness ; and while he still loves me, nothing shall part us, though all the ills of life should accumulate around him."

The words had scarcely passed the lips of the excited young man, when a slave of Yusnu-gul's harem stood slipperless at the door of the apartment, holding in her hand an embroidered boksha, which she laid at the feet of Hassan as the gift of the Defter-dar ; and then, retreating a few paces, she crossed her hands before her, and awaited in silence the orders of her lord.

With an eager hand and a throbbing heart, Hassan prepared to unfold the handkerchief ; and Yusnu-gul raised herself from her recumbent position to feast her eyes on the costly present which her son was about to reveal.

It was not the expectation of acquiring a new and valuable possession which agitated Hassan as he threw back the folds of the boksha : it was the consciousness that the gift offered on the occasion of the Bairam is always in proportion to the degree of regard in which the indi-

36 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

vidual to whom it is offered is held by the donor; and his dismay may consequently be conceived when the handkerchief delivered up its contents. The blood mounted to his brow, and the fire flashed from his deep eyes, as he discovered their nature—a shirt of the stuff worn by the boatmen on the Bosphorus; pantaloons of the common material used by the peasantry; a shawl whose coarse folds were meet only to bind the forehead of a ghez-metkian, or domestic slave. Such was the present which had been tendered to the hitherto favourite friend of the Defter-dar!

For a few moments the young man remained speechless; and that brief space sufficed for a thousand comments from Yusnu-gul. “ Shekiur Allâh—Praise be to God ! ” she exclaimed ; “ we are not yet so sunk as to need such courtesy as this ! Is the Defter-dar become a divanè, an idiot, or does he take you for the son of a baghdjee,* that he sends you garments fitting only for a slave ! Sen chok adam, you are much of a man, if you bear this without complaint ! ”

* A labourer.

But Hassan answered not. He sat with his head bowed down upon his breast, lost in thought ; until, as the indignation of his mother became gradually more loud and less measured, he roused himself, and replied in a broken tone : “Enough of this. I have read the meaning of the Defter-dar—he is lord of his own will, and I have no right to condemn him for its exercise. All the world has changed to him ; and he is free in his turn to change to me. It is his own fiat which separates us. May he find another heart that will cling to him as fondly and as faithfully as that of Hassan would have done had he not spurned it from him !”

A gush of tears followed the words ; and hastily flinging from him the wadded covering of the tandour* beneath which he had been sitting, the young man folded his pelisse about him, and rushed into the street. He had need of the keen cold air that was blowing from the Bosphorus to relieve his laboured and painful breathing, for his agony suffocated him.

* A wooden frame, containing a brazier of heated charcoal, and overlaid with silken coverlets.

38 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

" All, save this, I could have borne ;" he murmured to himself ; " but to be ranked among his menial servants—to be put upon a footing with his slaves—to be tacitly taught that he holds me as lightly as any other varlet whom he has bought with his gold—this only I cannot bear. Ill-fated Hassan ! to have but one friend, and to lose him thus !"

For hours did the young man wander about the city : he heard not the busy hum of the streets ; he heeded not the bright eyes which flashed upon him as he passed, from beneath the jealous yashmac ;* he returned not the greetings that were addressed to him by his acquaintance, nor the idle jests of which he was the subject. His mind was absorbed by one engrossing idea ; and at intervals he mentally repeated, " Ill-fated Hassan ! to have but one friend, and to lose him thus !"

In this dark mood of mind the young Effendi turned aside from the streets, just as twilight was beginning to thicken around him ; and entered one of the cemeteries of the city. The

* Veil worn by Turkish females in the street.

night-wind was already sighing among the tall cypresses that overshadowed the graves, and the turbaned head-stones gleamed cold and ghastly through the gloom. In the distance the illuminated minarets looked like fairy palaces hung in mid-air ; the world without was brightened by festivity, and loud with revel — Hassan felt as though it were a bitter mockery ;—and while he lingered among the damp graves, he congratulated himself in the darkness of his spirit that he was alone ; and, in the fervour of the feeling he exclaimed aloud, “ Yes ; they too must run the same career of cheating affection ; but as yet they are happy—for them the veil is still unrent, and they deem that all men are truth—but *I* am undeceived. Inshallah—I trust in God ! I have drained my draught of bitterness, and the cup is empty. Ill-fated Hassan ! to have but one friend, and to lose him thus ! ”

“ And what avails friendship at your bright age, Effendim ? ” murmured out a low voice close beside him, as a small hand was laid lightly on his arm : “ Bosh der — it is nothing. Friendship is for the grey-beard and the

dotard ; but your beard is yet black as the midnight cloud, and your wit keen as the dagger in your girdle — friendship is but the dregs which life offers to the aged when youth has drained the draught—friendship is the cold resting-place of satiety, when passion has extinguished the flames of its fiery car, and swept onward on dusky wings into irrecoverable darkness. You are not formed for friendship — the spring sun does but light up the flowers : the fruits of autumn require a fiercer beam. You are like one who hungers at a feast, because he lacks energy to stretch forth his hand."

" Who are you ? and what would you with me ?" asked Hassan, gloomily.

" I am called Felech-so," was the reply ; " and I ask of you only to be just to yourself ; the bulbul amid its sorrows has its rose—it murmurs not to the winds of heaven without one fond ear to listen ; there is a charm even in grief where it awakens sympathy. But the brightest eye will grow dim with tears, and the smoothest brow become furrowed by bitter thought ; and thus the young and the quick-hearted do well to

trample care beneath their feet, ere it becomes too strong to be overmastered."

"Your's is joyous philosophy ; affiet ollah — much good may it do you ;" said Hassan with a scornful smile, as he bent down to take a closer view of his companion, interested in spite of himself in the singularity of the adventure : "but a man must be a fop or a stoic who professes it."

"And wherefore ?" asked the low, soft, but somewhat mocking voice : "the stoic of three-and-twenty bids fair to change his creed at fifty for one less stern. Hassan Effendi, if you could only look on me, you would believe me."

"You know me, then ?" said the young man, with astonishment.

"Know you ?" was the laughing rejoinder : "who in Stamboul knows you not ? Those who may not gather the rose are, nevertheless, not forbidden to look upon it."

Hassan listened more complacently. "I have tracked you for the last hour : I would fain save you from yourself. You are cursing your felech,*

* Constellation.

when you are, in truth, your own worst enemy. Move a few paces onward, into yonder spot, where the reflection of a cluster of blazing minarets almost cheats the eye into a belief of daylight. I will detain you but a moment, and you shall then be free to act as you deem best."

Hassan involuntarily obeyed ; and, as he followed closely on the footsteps of his strange guide, he was struck with the lightness of her movements, and the graceful undulations of her slight figure ; but when they had at length reached the spot which she indicated, and that she withdrew her yashmac, and revealed to him the loveliest face on which he had ever looked, his breath came quicker, and he demanded hurriedly : — " How said you that you were called ?"

" Felech-so"—murmured the low voice.

" And you are rightly named !" exclaimed the excited young man ; " for your constellation must, indeed, be ever in the ascendant. Speak ! What would you ?"

" Effendim, I have told you all my errand.

I would fain call back the smile to your lip, and the light to your eye. Our moulahs may prate to you of prayer — our Pashas of power — our merchants of gold — I promise you *all* these, if you care to mend your fortune. And now, follow me on the instant, if you will ; or bid me farewell at once, for, if we part to-night, we part for ever. I am a Turkish woman ; the sun has set, and I am yet abroad : none, save yourself, must look upon, or dog me. How say you ? Will you confide in me ? Can my smile lighten your grief ? sen bilirsen—you know best—it is for you to decide; will you trust to me ?”

“ Instantly — eternally.”

“ It is well ;” said Felech-so, as she readjusted her yashmac, and drew her heavy cloak more closely about her :— “ I shall lead you by bye-paths and unfrequented streets : follow me at a distance ; and when you see me enter the dwelling whither I am about to conduct you, the door will be left ajar, and you may safely pass the threshold.

“ Stay yet a moment”—murmured Hassan.

“ And, wherefore, Effendim ? When once we

44 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

'have left the public streets, and that the same roof covers us, shall I not be free to fill your pipe, to hand your slippers, and to serve your coffee ? Will not the music of my zebec be softer than the distant murmurs of the city ? and the glances of your slave be more dazzling than the glare of many torches ?'

Hassan insisted no farther ; and in the next instant he was following the short and rapid steps of his new acquaintance through byeways hitherto unknown to him. At times he caught glimpses of the Bosphorus, basking in the reflection of the myriad lamps of the hill-seated city : at times he left it far behind him, to follow the ascent of some steep and narrow street — but he hesitated no longer : and, after the hurried walk of an hour, during the whole of which time he never once lost sight of his mysterious guide, he saw her pause an instant at the portal of a stately building whose vast shadow lay long upon the earth, and then disappear across the threshold. In the next moment he stood on the same spot : the door, as he had been forewarned, remained ajar ; he pushed it gently back, strode through

the portal, and found himself in a spacious and covered court, lighted only by one dim and flickering lamp.

Hassan stood for a while in some perplexity, and not without a passing suspicion that treachery was intended towards him ; when suddenly a black slave, habited in a rich costume, who had evidently been awaiting his arrival, seized him by the hand, and drew him forward. Hassan was neither of an age nor a temperament to yield slavishly to fear, yet, as he was hurried onward through dark passages, and dragged up one flight of steps and down another, where the deep silence was broken only by his own footfalls and those of his conductor, a vague apprehension of evil grew upon him ; but it was by this time too late to recede, for, even could he have escaped from his companion, and had no resistance been offered to his retreat, he was conscious that he should be totally unable to retrace his path : and under these circumstances he resolved quietly to follow up the adventure, terminate as it might.

Having come to this decision, he bestowed

46 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

undivided attention on the movements of the slave who conducted him ; and soon became convinced that, although the building into which he had been introduced was extremely spacious, he had, nevertheless, trodden the same ground more than once : a circumstance which proved that, whatever might be the motive of its owner, the intention was evidently to mystify him as to its formation and extent. Not a glimpse of light had he encountered since he quitted the court ; and, as a door immediately in front of him suddenly fell back, Hassan involuntarily pressed his open palm upon his eyes to shield them from a glare which almost blinded him. Peals of ringing laughter, and the glad sounds of many zebecs, mingled with the joyous voices of women, burst upon his ear ; and, as he hastily withdrew his hand, the light form of Felech-so detached itself from a group of young beauties, as fair and bright as houris, and approached him with a bounding step.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DIAMOND MERCHANT—*continued.*

HOUR after hour sat Yusnu-gul in her apartment, listening to the footfalls of every passing slave, and deeming that each in turn heralded the return of Hassan; but Hassan came not!

Daylight had passed away; and the illuminated minarets shot high into the air, like fiery shafts, their graceful columns of light, while the bosom of the Channel glowed like molten metal beneath the blaze. Music was soft in the distance, and, at intervals, a light laugh or a merry song rang upon the wind—and still Hassan came not!

As yet, however, Yusnu-gul rather marvelled than mourned at his delay: all the youth of Stamboul were abroad in the glad city, and

Hassan, gentle as he was, ever loved to be the first in every festival. The aged woman, therefore, quietly replenished her pipe, and sipped her coffee, and lost herself in conjectures as to the motive of the extraordinary conduct of the Defter-dar, and mental repinings at the unmerited mortification of her high-hearted son.

Another hour was filtered through the lap of time, and the loud cannon boomed along the Bosphorus in rapid succession, while the flitting fires of the festival ran skimmering along the dark face of night, like mimic lightning; glancing over the tops of the tall cedars, and spreading in sheets of transient flame a mantle of golden glory about the city. At length the cold grey light of morning broke pale and chilly in the east; the dusky rocks of the Asiatic coast loomed out, stern and sterile; the white buildings of Pera gleamed blank and bleak in the faint sky; and the distant minarets of Scutari looked like giant-spirits, as the first beams of day revealed their shadowy outline. It was the morrow of the Bairam—and still Hassan returned not!

Yusnu-gul, who loved her son with a devotion

as untiring as it was profound, had watched throughout the night without a sensation of weariness. Hassan was young and high-spirited, and had, doubtless, been detained by his associates; and the heart of the mother was soothed by the belief that, amid the dissipation of the festival, he would forget his recent mortification. But with the chilly, cheerless dawn came other and more anxious thoughts. Alike to the pain-worn patient and to the weary watcher—to the sick and to the sorrowing—there are no moments so sad and so depressing as those in which day and night stand together on the threshold of time, as though each were reluctant to yield up its empire.

When the light broke around her, Yusnu-gul began to fear she knew not what! Hassan was impetuous, haughty, and uncompromising; of what rashness might he not have been guilty, in the first rush of his resentment? True, he had loved the Defter-dar as a father; but Yusnu-gul was woman enough to be aware that outraged affection is the very foundation on which may be erected the firmest superstructure of hate. His attach-

ment to the Ex-Treasurer had been divested of every taint of worldliness and self-interest — a spontaneous outpouring of reverence and regard —but it is ever the most generous spirit which is the quickliest stung ; and the mother found no consolation for her solitude in the suggestions of her awakened fancies.

The slaves of Yusnu-gul removed her morning meal untouched. Hassan was yet absent ; and the tearless eyes of the grey and faded woman burnt with the fever of her throbbing brain.

It was thus that she was found by Nefzi-Sabah, the favourite wife of the Dester-dar, who, on the day succeeding that of the Baïram, entered the harem of Yusnu-gul, followed by a couple of her slaves ; and, casting aside her yashmac, turned towards the mother of Hassan a brow as moody as her own.

“ Hai, hai—so, so, you are tardy with your welcome, Effendim ;” commenced the beautiful Circassian, for the aged woman had uttered no greeting to her visitor ; “ nor do I ask from you more speedy courtesy. Mashallah ! the wrongs that I have suffered from the son are fitly followed by the coldness of the mother.”

"If you are come to tell of Hassan, speak!" said Yusnu-gul, earnestly.

"*If I am come to tell of Hassan!*" was the retort; "think you that I can tamely suffer the rivalry of a stripling in the affections of the Defter-dar? Are my eyes dim, or my cheeks faded, that I should be overlooked because he has a smooth tongue and a ready wit? Is he not a *sakil-siz*—a no-beard?"

"Is Hassan indeed with the Defter-dar?" asked Yusnu-gul, while a gleam of joy lit up her faded brow.

"What avails it that he is not;" demanded Nefzi-Sabah peevishly; "when even the ingratitude and courtesy of his absence during the festival of yesterday have not yet opened the eyes of the Defter-dar. Ne var—what is this? Am I to listen to no discourse more flattering to my self-love than repinings at the non-appearance of an ingrate?"

"Talk not of ingratitude, Effendim;" said the mother indignantly; "after the bokshalik* with which the Defter-dar honoured my son,

* Gift.

52 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

he could scarcely have expected thanks at his hands — Inshallah! Hassan Effendi is no slave."

"Were he a Pasha he could not desire one more costly!" exclaimed the Circassian; "but perchance the spoiled favourite forgot the friend, when he no longer looked upon the Defter-dar."

"A shirt suited to a caiquejhe!"* said the mother, scornfully.

"Pistols for his woman-hand, of which the diamond-hilts can alone be valuable to the troubler of the peace of harems——" followed up the Circassian.

"Schalvar,† fitting only for a peasant——" pursued Yusnu-gul.

"A Damascus dagger whose fellow would be sought in vain, even throughout the golden city of Stamboul——" persisted Nefzi-Sabah.

"A shawl——" commenced the aged woman.

"Worthy to have covered the loins of the camel which carried the Prophet——" broke in her companion.

Yusnu-gul clapped her hands with a gesture

* Boatman.

† Trowsers.

of contemptuous indifference, and hastily commanded that the boksha of the Defter-dar should be unfolded before the visitor; when the surprise of the Circassian was extreme, on seeing the coarse and unseemly garments which had been tendered to Hassan as the gift of his protector.

Rapidly and energetically did Nefzi-Sabah enumerate and describe the contents of the hand-kerchief which had been prepared by the hands of the Defter-dar for his favourite; and, forgetful of her own fancied subject of complaint against Hassan, she was soon engaged as anxiously as Yusnu-gul herself in a thousand contradictory and improbable conjectures as to the cause of his unwonted absence. But, alas! in vain did they surmise, and consult, and explain—Hassan returned not!

Months wore painfully away. The heart of Yusnu-gul was a widowed heart; and, as she looked upon the sparkling waters of the Bosphorus during the sunny days of summer, she saw not their beauty, she felt not their charm: to her those waters ever seemed to be the grave of Hassan.

“Yes,” would she murmur to herself in her bereavement; “there—beneath that smiling and treacherous wave, lies my manly boy—my only one—the light of my eyes, the moon of my evening sky, the bulbul whose voice is hushed; the joy of my old age, Hassan the high-hearted !”

Nor did the Defter-dar mourn less deeply the disappearance of his favourite. Of his death, his violent or self-inflicted death, it was impossible to doubt, as every endeavour to discover his fate had proved abortive; and the first anguish of despair had slowly yielded to the calmer but no less heart-felt grief of resignation, when a letter was one morning placed in the hands of the Defter-dar, who started with a surprise which almost amounted to incredulity, on recognizing the well-known character of Hassan.

“Bismillah! — In the name of the most merciful Allah;” such were the contents of the paper; “I am lost to you, and to the world; I am lost even to myself; and, having told you this, I dare not add any thing in elucidation of a mystery which must have bewildered, and,

I do even hope, have grieved you. I think of you often—fondly—your memory dwells with me as the remembrance of lost light lingers with the tenant of a dungeon; or as the vision of departed liberty comes back upon the spirit of the despairing captive. I love to remember that I was dear to you; I have forgotten all that wounded alike my pride and my affection. I retain jealously and fondly the gentler reminiscences which are wound about my heart too closely ever to be rent asunder! I parted from you proudly; all the kindness that you had lavished upon me; every token of affection, every proof of regard, had been the spontaneous offering of your own generous nature. Alas! I now appeal to your memory as a suppliant. If you ever loved—if you still love me—if you would save me from misery, from suffering, from death—a speedy and painful death—cherish no doubt, admit no suspicion; seek not to penetrate a mystery too dense ever to be fathomed. Do not despise nor refuse me; but remembering only the loving trust of our earlier and happier communion, bestow out of the wealth which Allah has poured into

your lap sufficient to save me from destruction. Deposit, at the waning of the moon, a purse, containing twenty thousand piastres, on the tall turbaned head-stone to the right of the great avenue of the Cemetery of Scutari; one will be there to secure it; but, as you love me, linger not to assure yourself of this fact, nor to palter with the messenger. In doing either you will destroy me. I dare add no more—pity and pray for the lost Hassan."

The Defter-dar read and re-read the letter; there could be no doubt but that the handwriting was that of him whom he had loved so well—of the son of Yusnu-gul; and, although with a sick heart, and a throbbing pulse, he hesitated not to obey the bidding.

The dawn was spreading faintly in the sky, and the moon was waning into a pale and sickly white, when the Defter-dar, leaving his caique at the pier of Scutari, slowly wound his way through the hushed and slumbering city, and thence passed alone into its stately necropolis. Long sweeps of wind were heaving the heavy cypress boughs, like spirit-sighs; but the Defter-

dar quailed not in his purpose. He plunged into the deep gloom of the grave-forest, and soon stood before the tall stone which had been indicated. At its base was one of those small reservoirs, hollowed in the marble for the use of the birds and the wandering dogs, so common in Turkish burial-places ; the little basin was dried up : and in this spot the generous friend deposited the sum which had been required of him, turned a long, searching look into the gloom around him, and then slowly moved away.

But it was difficult to depart without one retrospective glance ; and the Defter-dar had not progressed more than a few yards, ere he paused, and looked back. A dusky figure flitted across the path, and lingered an instant beneath the tall tomb—a deep voice murmured, “ It is well ! ” and then the ex-courtier was once more alone in the midst of the deep stillness.

CHAPTER V.

THE DIAMOND MERCHANT—*continued.*

A year went by — a long and dreary year — and the memory of Hassan became to the Defter-dar like the indistinct vision of a painful dream ; but the mystery was yet to deepen, and the fact of his existence was once more to arouse all the pain-fraught sympathies of those who had loved him. A second letter, written like the first in agony of spirit, was placed in the hands of the Defter-dar at the expiration of that period by one of his slaves ; and the bearer, unmoved by the peril of his mission, had cast off his slippers on the threshold of the Ex-Treasurer, and there awaited a reply.

“ Once,” thus ran the missive ; “ once I was dear to you ; you were to me as a father, and

I loved you as a son. That I still hold you in my heart, be this my witness! I may be forgotten—may have been so long; yet I pray you in mercy to recall my memory. I am in danger—imminent, instant danger—and you alone can save me. You are wealthy, you are generous—a trusty slave will deliver this letter. Should you deny my prayer, or detain my messenger, I shall soon be beyond help. If, however, you would once more save me from destruction, let him be the bearer of twenty thousand piastres. I dare not doubt that you will preserve me; Inshallah! you are the last hope of the miserable Hassan!"

The Defter-dar summoned the strange slave into his presence; he bribed him with gold and soft words; he threatened him with the bastinado and the bowstring; but he could extort no intelligence of the present position or the threatened peril of Hassan.

"Destroy, or even detain me, and he is lost;" was the only answer to every threat. "Dog me; and, while I am eluding your pursuit, his fate will be accomplished."

To the more gentle argument of bribe and

entreaty he was equally invulnerable. "If you grant the request of which I am the bearer," he said, "Hassan is saved; and for myself, in that case, my reward is sure. Effendim, I ask of you nothing save dispatch."

Without the hesitation of a moment, the Defter-dar placed the required sum in the hands of the messenger; and accompanied it with a letter, replete with friendship and anxiety, to Hassan, and expressions of the most affectionate and sorrowing interest. He besought him to unveil his melancholy mystery to his best friend, for melancholy it must assuredly be, when it could thus sever him from the mother of his youth and the companion of his manhood; he promised, should he have placed his life in jeopardy by some act of violence or folly, to exert for him all the interest which he yet possessed at court; and concluded by drawing a miserable picture of the wretched Yusnu-gul, withering away into a solitary and unregretted grave.

But when the letter was concluded, and the money delivered into the keeping of the slave, it was not so easy to suffer him to depart unwatched;

and a trusty servant was put upon his track, who followed for hours the intricate course of the stranger ; but he followed in vain—the inattention of a moment sufficed to render abortive the exertions of a day ; and he returned to the palace of the Defter-dar, defeated and baffled.

Once more months passed away ; and, even as it had been foretold to Hassan, the disconsolate Yusnu-gul died. She had mourned her son, when she believed him to be lost to her for ever, with the calm, deep grief of resignation ; but her feeble frame and excited mind could not contend with the irritation of this new mystery, this unfathomable secret ; and she bent beneath the shock as the forest tree bends to the tempest breath ; and as the overstrained branches, bowed beyond their powers of resistance, rend the trunk from which they sprang, so did the feelings of Yusnu-gul, indulged and encouraged in the solitude of the harem, break the heart that could sustain the pressure no longer.

There were moments, when in thinking of Hassan, and in weaving strange fancies on his fate, the Defter-dar almost hoped that he should

hear of him no more. That his letter had remained unanswered rather grieved than surprised him; for he felt that, had Hassan been free to act, he would long ere this have returned to his home, and to those whom he had loved from his boyhood; and he, consequently, visited his silence upon the same system of coercion which had forbidden his re-appearance among his friends. Could he have disentangled the ravelled skein of secrecy in whose meshes the poor youth was bound, the Defter-dar would have exerted every energy, and strained every nerve to restore him to the world; but to hear of him only to earn the miserable privilege of knowing him to be beyond human help, was a torment rather than a blessing to his anxious affection. His mother was no more; his former associates had almost forgotten him. He, alone, remembered him with regret; and yet he would have thanked the messenger who brought the tidings of his death. But this was not to be: a third time came a scroll from Hassan — a voice from his living grave — a record of his jeopardy — an appeal to the friend who had cherished him :—

"For the last time," he wrote, "Hassan the son of Saïd, pours forth his grief before the Defter-dar of the Sultan Mourad. I have a vague dream that a shadow had passed over your brightness, ere from me light was altogether shut out. It may have been so — I know not if it were—I heed it not, though you proclaim it to be truth. The sky is full of stars: the sage alone marks the quenching of those which fade from the galaxy: to the common gaze all is unchanged — I shall trouble you no more — this is my last appeal. Save me, or I am lost — gold alone can serve me: you have gold, and your heart is large: to none else can I apply. I write to you like a madman, but it is only the madness of desperation. I care not what may be the consequence, I will write to you no more. Friend ! father ! protector !—save me again on this occasion—place the same sum as before at the disposal of my messenger; and then pity and forget the lost Hassan."

The Defter-dar replied to the missive by silently putting a purse of gold into the hands of the expectant slave, and coldly telling him that

he was free to depart when he listed. The man looked steadily in the face of the courtier, made a respectful obeisance, and withdrew. As he left the house, he glanced stealthily back to note if he were pursued, but the street was empty ; and the manner of the Defter-dar had been sufficiently indifferent to convince him that the existence and well-being of Hassan were rapidly becoming unimportant to his former friend. Thus assured, the messenger made few digressions from his direct path ; and, after half an hour of rapid walking, beat upon the door of a stately mansion, and was instantly admitted.

But the Defter-dar had learnt a lesson of self-reliance from the failure of the attendant whom he had on a previous occasion intrusted with the discovery of a secret which he was morbidly anxious to unravel ; and, suffering the messenger of Hassan to leave the house by the main portal, unpursued and unimpeded, he hastily changed his turban and pelisse, and passed out by a side door opening into his own garden, and thence into a cross path terminating in the main street, along which he shrewdly conjectured that the

slave, whose person he was confident of recognizing on the instant, must ultimately pass. Nor was he deceived in his conjecture ; for, having by this less circuitous route arrived in the great thoroughfare before the person whom he was anxious to observe, and having, moreover, by his own change of costume, prevented all suspicion save that which might be created by his subsequent want of caution, he had ere long the satisfaction of seeing the slave turn the corner of the lane, and make his way towards the great square of the Atmeidan.

The Defter-dar was careful, as they crossed the large open space, and passed beside its stately columns, to shroud himself among the crowd ; and, when they entered the street beyond it, to leave such a distance between the stranger and himself as to set suspicion at defiance. He remarked that the slave looked back at intervals, like one who cared not to trust altogether to his seeming impunity ; but whenever this happened, the Defter-dar craftily paused, as though he were entering some house beside his path ; or fairly swung himself round, and made a few backward

66 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

steps, as though his route crossed that of his fellow passenger: thus preventing the perfect view of his person which would have betrayed his continued identity.

And thus it was that the Defter-dar tracked the messenger of Hassan to the dwelling which he entered; and he even ventured to linger for a while in its immediate neighbourhood to mark whether he would re-appear: but he came not forth again; and the Defter-dar finally bent his steps homeward, with the feeling of one who is just awakening from a perplexed and painful dream.

On the morrow he caused strict but guarded inquiries to be made, and soon learnt the history of the house and its inhabitants. It was the abode, said the neighbours, of a stern and pious matron, Hemdounè Hanoum by name, whose harem was invisible as that of the Grand Seigniour himself: who gave alms largely to the poor; and who welcomed with courtesy every wandering dervish or fakir who claimed her hospitality, and deemed her cares amply repaid by their prayers and blessings.

In vain did the Defter-dar endeavour by subtle

questionings to elicit information of a more mysterious and exciting nature ; the whole day was spent in useless efforts to shake, or at least to throw a doubt upon, this well-connected story ; and, when evening fell, he became more than ever perplexed as to the measures which he should adopt to penetrate so closely-woven a mystery.

The hour of rest came, and the Defter-dar retired to his bed, but not to sleep. He lay revolving a thousand schemes, each less feasible than the last, until suddenly a new idea burst upon him ; when, with a prayer to Allah and the Prophet, he composed himself quietly upon his cushions with a smile upon his lip, and slept.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DIAMOND MERCHANT—*continued*

EARLY in the morning, the purse-bearer of the Defter-dar bent his way to the great Tcharchi of the city, and was absent nearly an hour; and during this time, his master more than once removed the chibouque from his lips, and leant forward in the attitude of listening. When at length he returned, he passed at once to the presence of the Effendi; and, having made his obeisance, and carefully let fall behind him the heavy screen of tapestry which veiled the door of the apartment, he drew from beneath his ample robe a handkerchief, from which he took the flowing garments of a Bektachy, or Mountain

Dervish. There was the wadded cap of cloth with its binding of crimson wool ; the buffalo-horn with its leathern sling ; the broad belt of untanned leather clasped with a clasp of metal ; the scarlet slippers, the heavy rosary, the iron lamp suspended from the girdle, and the ample robe and mantle of serge.

The metamorphosis was speedily completed ; and only a few moments had passed since the return of the purse-bearer, ere the ex-courtier stood before him in the full garb of a mountain devotee. But the Defter-dar, however excellent he admitted the disguise to be, would not venture to trust it to the prying eye of day ; and the garments were accordingly laid aside until the twilight came to aid, with its long shadows, the enterprise of the adventurous friend.

At length the favourable hour arrived ; and when the Defter-dar passed out into the street in the midst of his own slaves, not a prostration was made, though many an eye turned on him in wonder, as none had seen him enter. Satisfied with this unceremonious proof of his successful transformation, the heart of the Effendi

beat high with hope as he pressed forward to the dwelling of the mysterious Hemdounè Hanoum ; nor did he allow his hand to falter as he beat upon the well-remembered door.

A weary interval elapsed ere his summons was answered ; but ultimately a sturdy slave appeared, who seemed desirous to veil the interior of the dwelling from the gaze of the intruder, as he scarcely opened the portal sufficiently to enable the suppliant dervish to perceive that the hall beyond was of vast extent and magnificent proportions, although scantily lighted from the gallery which ran round its lofty walls.

The Defter-dar was not, however, to be diverted from his purpose by the surliness of a porter ; and he told his tale of travel and weariness in a tone which at once insured to it the ample credence of his listener.

“ The Hanoum Effendi cares not to open her doors after sunset ;” said the slave coldly ; “ she is a widow, and deems it not seemly. But you are a holy man, and you are travel-spent ; I will tell her of your arrival, and shall be speedy

with my answer. Bashustun, upon my head be it ! she shall know that you are at her threshold." And, without awaiting the reply of the Defter-dar, he hastily closed the door, and the sound of his rapidly retreating footsteps soon died away in the distance.

After a brief interval he returned, and with civil words welcomed the stranger to the roof of his mistress, as he stood aside to give him entrance ; and the Defter-dar found himself in a stately hall, paved with marble, around which ran a wide gallery, whence opened a range of apartments. But he had little time to acquaint himself with the locality, for he was hastily hurried forward a considerable distance down one or two dark passages ; and, finally, into a second saloon of incomparable beauty, surrounded, like the outer hall, by a gallery, whose heavy balustrades were richly wrought and gilded, and to which access was afforded by a noble flight of marble steps that swept downward on either side of the stately apartment ; he cast a hasty glance around as he was about to follow his conductor to a chamber on the ground

floor, when a shuffling of slippers was heard, and the slave paused, and bowed reverently before a tall muffled figure which hastily approached him.

"Is this the holy man?" asked a voice which would have been harsh, had not time softened in some degree its asperity; "Nebilirim—what can I say? Is this the dervish who claims shelter for the night beneath my roof?" And, as the question was uttered, a lean and withered arm emerged from the mass of drapery, and a bony hand held a lamp close to the face of the pretended devotee.

The Defter-dar bent low before the speaker, and answered humbly in the affirmative.

A shrill, mocking laugh, that rung painfully in his ears, was the result of the assurance; and, ere he had recovered from its effects, the mantle in which the female was enveloped was cast off; the lamp that she held transferred to the slave who still stood silently beside her; and, as she clapped her hands, the doors along the gallery were flung back, disclosing a glare of light by which the Defter-dar was momentarily blinded,

while, like a flight of summer birds, forth flocked a troop of maidens as fair as the morning, whose ringing and yet musical laughter created in an instant an atmosphere of joy about them, as they rapidly descended the marble stairs into the hall.

“Ajaib — wonderful ! here is one,” half croaked, half shrieked the withered crone who appeared to be the mistress of the revels, “one who comes to us with a chaplet of beads and the robe of a dervish, and thinks to cheat us into a belief of his sanctity ! Look to it, all of you, for there must be treachery here.” And, as she ceased speaking, the slave put the lamp into the hand of the foremost of the young beauties, who, with a gesture half mocking, half curious, raised it to the face of the merchant as the old woman had previously done, and then passed it, with a silent shake of the head, to her neighbour.

When each had played her part in this singular pantomime, and that all had disclaimed any knowledge of the stranger’s identity, he stood in the centre of the group, utterly unable

instant, as though some faint and far-off memory were shaping itself into tangibility in her mind ; but she did not long indulge so dangerous a mood, and, in the next moment, she was busily engaged in assisting her companions to replace the coarse head-gear of the Defter-dar with a turban of consummate cost and beauty, and to throw over his robe of serge a pelisse richly lined and overlaid with sables. When this was done, they led him to a sofa, and established him among the yielding cushions, whose golden embroidery shewed gorgeously on its ground of pale blue satin ; and, while one filled his chibouque of jasmin wood, and another handed to him on her knees the minute cup of mocha, in its precious setting of fillagreed gold, lipped with jewels, Felech-so established herself on a Persian carpet at his feet, and, with her graceful zebec and powerful voice, regulated the movements of a group who had ranged themselves in the centre of the floor, to dance the dance of the harem.

The Defter-dar was dazzled, but he was not blinded. He felt at once that all this was part

of a system intended to bewilder and throw him off his guard ; but he was no longer young enough to yield up his reason captive to the fascinations of the moment. Dark eyes were flashing round him, white arms were wreathing gracefully in air, and long jetty tresses were falling in rich masses on shoulders as white and smooth as ivory. 'The Defter-dar saw all, and felt its beauty : but, as he gazed about him, he remembered a tale, which had once been told to him by a giaour, of one of the diversions of the far West, where crowds flock together, and seat themselves under pavilions of crimson, to listen to soft music, and to see fair women and graceful men mimic the adventures of every-day life, and live through a long and eventful existence in the course of one brief night. Even thus looked the Defter-dar on the scene around him. He felt that it was a hollow and deceitful pageant, which must ere long fade before sterner and colder realities ; and when the bright shapes which had flitted past him in the dance ultimately grouped themselves about him, as if to await his pleasure, he thanked them

for their courtesy in a voice as steady as its wont.

The dance had not long ceased when Hemdounè Hanoum entered the apartment, and, as she crossed the threshold, every fair head bent low before her. “ It is well,” she said, as she glanced towards her visiter; “ my lord has cast off his disguise, and has now only to tell us his name and rank, ere we devise new modes of amusement to divert his leisure hours.”

“ Ne bilirim — what can I say? You do your slave too much grace, Effendim,” said the Defter-dar quietly; “ that I am not that which I would fain have seemed, is true, and I will not wrong your sagacity by attempting longer to conceal the fact. But neither am I that which your courtesy would suggest. Your reception has been so much beyond my poor deserts, that I am bound in gratitude to tell you all——”

As the Defter-dar paused for a moment, he accidentally caught the bright eye of Felech-so fixed eagerly, and, as it seemed, deprecatingly, upon him; but it might have been only fancy

that there was warning in her earnest gaze, and he had no opportunity to convince himself of the fact, as her head was hastily averted when their eyes had met.

“ I am a merchant, Effendim, trading from a port in the Black Sea to the fair city of Stamboul, and I have just freighted an outward-bound brig with the whole produce of ten years of industry, leaving myself so scantily provided as to be utterly unable to meet the daily outlay necessary to my existence, until the arrival of a brother merchant, for whom I am anxiously watching from hour to hour ; and who has promised me a share in a venture of so profitable a character, that, should he hold to his word, my fortune is made. In this straight, being unwilling to lodge myself in a khan without the present means of paying fairly for the accommodation, I exchanged my usual dress with a dealer in the Tcharchi for the costume of a mountain dervish, well knowing that in that guise I should be certain to profit by the alms of the pious. The fame of the holy and charitable Hemdounè Hanoum reached me as I stood in

one of the great thoroughfares of the city, uncertain towards which quarter I should first bend my steps, and decided me at once. I have now confessed myself to be an impostor, Ef-fendim, and should you put me forth, I shall submit to the justice of your fiat without a murmur."

As he ceased speaking the Defter-dar glanced towards Felech-so, and this time there could be no mistake. An expression of unutterable relief had passed over her features, but she sat with her face turned slightly aside, and her hands folded upon her bosom, as though she felt no interest in the narration of the stranger.

"And you are then really too poor to lodge yourself in a public caravanserai?" said Hem-dounè Hanoum interrogatively.

"You have said it," was the concise reply.

"Do you not rather mock us with a new fable?" asked the old woman angrily, "when you amuse us with the tale of your poverty, while you wear upon your finger a diamond which would well nigh ransom a province! Ey vah! we are not to be cheated twice."

For a moment the Defter-dar did not reply—for a second his ready wit deserted him—and the blood rushed in a volume to his brow, as he stood self-convicted of a carelessness which, for aught he knew, might perhaps cost him his life.

That the aged fiend who sat with her keen eyes fixed upon him, evidently gloating over his discomposure, would suffer him to depart after having laid bare before him, the secrets of her household, he was not weak enough to believe even for an instant ; and that she would not scruple to rid herself, by the most effectual means, of so profitless a guest, he was equally assured ; and, in this dilemma, he resolved to make one more attempt, ere he resigned himself tamely to a fate at which it was not difficult to guess.

“ What blossom shall be hidden from the sun ? and what sand-rift shall resist the billow ?” exclaimed he, as if in admiration of the shrewdness of his hostess. “ Is it not in vain that I would conceal even a portion of my secret from Hemdounè Hanoum, to whom it is given to

know all things. This ring, Effendim ;” and, as in obedience to a gesture of the old woman, he withdrew it from his finger, and placed it in her hand, he remembered with a pang that the precious jewel had been the gift of the Sultan in his days of court favour, and that it was now, in all probability, lost to him for ever !—“ this ring is a portion of the mystery. Look on it well, and then tell me if it be not a diamond of surpassing beauty.”

The aged woman readily obeyed : she passed the glorious jewel on her own bony finger, and, having examined it near the light, and ascertained that it was without spot or blemish ; and that, as she slowly moved her hand to and fro, it gave out a thousand rainbow tints, she withdrew with it into a far corner of the saloon, and there, shading it from the glare of the tapers, she admired the sparks which, with every movement that she made, it flung out into the darkness.

“ It is a rare stone !” she said, more blandly than she had yet spoken, as she returned to the side of the Defter-dar ; “ the Sultan himself

bath not a finer. I would fain hear its history ere I restore it to you."

" That shall you not do, Effendim," replied her crafty guest, " if its possession give you pleasure — nay, offer me no acknowledgments, I pray you ;" he added hastily, as his hostess was about to speak ; " keep the bauble, and I will tell you all. I have already stated that I am awaiting in Stamboul a merchant of my acquaintance ; but I played you false when I pleaded poverty as an extenuation of my disguise. I am about to confide to you a secret upon which hangs my life, but you will not betray me ; and brief shall be the period which intervenes ere I repay you a hundred fold for all the courtesies that you have lavished on me. Effendim, the trinket on your finger is a mere toy—the jewel is counterfeit—I came to the city with many such for sale, and I have parted from them all at a heavy sum, save this, which I retained in a weak fit of sentiment, because it had been given to me by my friend ere he admitted me to a share in his adventurous traffic. Many

of the stones with which I came laden to Stam-boul have found their way into the treasury of the Padishah,* others are in the harems of our wealthiest Pashas, while a few of the meanest are at this moment the boast and wonder of the bezenstein. Were my secret discovered, the bowstring would be my portion ; but, meanwhile, so long as I continue unbetrayed, I coin piastres faster than the Taraf-hanè† himself."

A deep thoughtfulness settled like a cloud on the stern brow of Hemdounè Hanoum, and she did not immediately reply to the communication of her guest ; but, after a while, she looked up, and said anxiously ; " Do I understand that you have no other jewel of the same sort in your possession ?"

" At this moment, none ;" answered the guest, readily ; " but my friend and principal, Mech-méd Cadirè Ishmaël, who himself manufactures them, should arrive in the city to-morrow evening at the latest ; and if it be permitted to him to share in the smiles which have lit up my

* Sovereign.

† Inspector of the Mint.

own existence since sunset, I will answer for the readiness with which he will repay the debt of hospitality, by permitting the Hanoum Ef-fendi to select a dozen of the stones, ere he offers them for public sale in the bezenstein, as a memorial of her own charity and our gratitude."

"But he will not know where to find you ;" suggested the Hanoum.

"Doubtlessly, should I not myself seek and conduct him hither, he will pursue me in vain ;" replied the Defter-dar ; "for he will scarcely look to find his comrade Ibrahim in the palace of a Pasha's wife."

"You shall describe the good merchant to my trusty slave Emin ;" said the old woman ; "and you can write a few words of greeting and invitation, which will be his warrant with your friend."

"You say well, Effendim," was the ready answer ; "but I know not the colour of his vest, nor the tint of his turban. Mechmed is from the desert, and only leaves the caravan to pass over to the Golden City. There are many

of his name in the bezenstein, and your slave may miss him until his fairest merchandise is bartered to the dealers in diamonds, and he has no longer any stones to offer to the Hanoum Effendi, or her ladies."

"It is true," said the crone, after another pause of thought; "I would have kept you here as a surety for his coming, but the jewel which you leave with me convinces me of your good faith. You shall depart then to-morrow at break of day, and at sunset I shall expect you back, accompanied by your friend. It will please me to see his merchandise, and to hear from him the tale of his desert-pilgrimage." She then clapped her hands, and a slave, habited in a flowing robe of crimson and gold, hastily obeyed the signal, and prostrated himself to the earth before her.

"Saduk," she said with peculiar emphasis; "conduct Ibrahim Effendi, my honoured guest, to a chamber near the hall of entrance. At day-break he will depart — hinder him not — I have told you my pleasure."

"To hear is to obey"—was the brief reply;

but, as the slave glanced towards the Defterdar, he could not wholly conceal the astonishment which the words of his mistress had elicited.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DIAMOND MERCHANT.—*continued.*

IN a short time all was silence in that house of mystery. The Defter-dar, greatly to his satisfaction, found himself lodged in a mean apartment opening beside the door of entrance ; and, having narrowly searched his chamber to ascertain that he could not be intruded upon from any other outlet, threw himself upon his bed to think over the occurrences of the evening. That he was still in considerable danger he was fully aware : for he comprehended at once that he was indebted to the cupidity of his hostess for even the questionable chance of escape which now offered itself. He had marked the sparkle of

her eye when she first detected the jewel : he had observed her inward struggle, ere, in the hope of greater gain, she had compelled herself to permit his departure : even yet she might repent ! And, as this last fearful reflection crossed his mind, the Defter-dar became uneasy and restless — fearing he knew not what ; and at intervals imagining that he detected through the deep stillness the stealthy tread of feet and the rustling of drapery. Hours passed over him thus—hours which appeared to his excited imagination as interminable : when suddenly he became aware that his fancy no longer cheated him, but that some one was beside him, whose deep and hurried breathing came hot and troubled to his brow.

The Defter-dar sprang instantly into a sitting posture, and would have spoken : but a small soft hand was pressed heavily upon his mouth, as the voice of Felech-so murmured in his ear : “ Khosh buldûk ! — well found ! Be calm—be silent — or you are lost — Hassan is lost — and I shall myself become the sacrifice of your indiscretion. We have no time to lose—listen to me

then attentively. Hassan is here, bowed by chains in a loathsome dungeon, where he will be suffered to exist until his friend the Defter-dar, to whom he has been compelled to apply for vast sums, refuses further to assist him. When the slave who bears his letter first returns empty-handed, Saduk and his comrade will at once end his sorrows with the bowstring : and I need not tell you, Effendim, that the grave betrays no secret. He is one of many who are wasting away their bright youth not a hundred feet beneath the spot where I now stand. Thrice have I saved the life of Hassan, when his hours were numbered by his refusal to write those letters to his friend. The accursed love of gold is the impulse of the vile mistress of this impious house. We, her slaves, the creatures whom she has bought at a price, and tutored in her wickedness, are taught to make our miserable beauty the means of whiling to her roof the young and the wealthy ; and here they are compelled to drag on a despairing existence, so long as their prayers for gold are answered by their friends. But, Hassan ! Hassan ! can you not save him

from this living death ? I have watched over his existence as though my own hung upon its duration, for I have learnt to love him in his misery. I it was who whiled him hither ; but now, now," she continued as her voice became stifled with agony : " now I would gladly lay down my blighted and unhappy life, to know that he was once more free."

" Tchapouk, tchapouk,—Haste ! haste ! let me know all," urged the Defter-dar.

" I trembled for you a few hours back," pursued Felech-so, struggling to controul her anguish ; " I know not why, but, from the moment of your entrance here, a strange wild hope grew in my heart that you were fated to save Hassan — and I trembled lest your own tale should destroy you. But you acted wisely, and for the moment you are saved. Think not, however, that I am duped by your fiction of the false diamond — trust not that Hemdounè Hanoum, when in the solitude of her chamber her fiendish avarice yields to her fear of detection and exposure, will not also awaken to a conviction of its falsehood ; and suspicious of your motive, place you at once

beyond all power of treachery. Wait not for the dawn, or you will never see the rise of another sun. I have drugged the sherbet of Saduk with opium ; he should keep the door, but even now he sleeps a sleep as deep as that of the grave. Take the key from his girdle, and fly—return speedily, but be it with help and arms—away. I dare not linger another moment—farewell, and remember Felech-so."

As the last words passed her lips, the Defterdar was conscious that she had left his side ; and an instant afterwards a cold stream of air, entering through a concealed opening in the wall of his apartment, assured him of her departure.

Not a moment was to be lost, and, hastily seizing the turban and pelisse which lay beside his bed, the excited courtier strode silently into the hall. An expiring lamp still flung a dim and uncertain light on the surrounding objects, and by its assistance he at once distinguished the form of Saduk, stretched on his mat in a heavy sleep. For one instant, and but one, the Defterdar hesitated. Should this nocturnal visit be only a part of the plot, to induce him to exhibit

suspicion, and thus afford a plausible pretext for violence? but immediately came the reflection that, if violence were indeed intended, no action of his own would be required as an apology for its exercise—and had not Felech-so told him that Hassan yet lived—in misery, and suffering, and chains? The Defter-dar despised himself that he had yielded even momentarily to the promptings of his cowardice; and, bending over Saduk for an instant to assure himself that his slumber was not feigned, he possessed himself of the huge key that was hidden amid the folds of the shawl which bound his waist, and ere long found himself beneath the broad moonlight in the open street.

The Defter-dar stopped not to admire the beautiful effects of light and shade which presented themselves as he hurried on, but hastily pursued his way to his own habitation; feeling as though he had been absent from his home for months: so much had he been impressed by the rapid and extraordinary events of the evening.

Morning was just beginning to break over the Asian hills when he reached his own door, and

beat loudly for admittance : and he had traversed his accustomed chamber more than once, and examined minutely the rich pelisse, and the costly cachemire that composed his turban, ere he could quite convince himself that he had not just awakened from a troubrous dream. As his thoughts unravelled themselves slowly from the chaos of memories in which they were involved, the Defter-dar was glad that he had retained these vouchers for his story, for the more he mused upon the night's adventure, the more he felt its apparent improbability and romance ; and, conscious of the imperative necessity of speedy and powerful measures, in order to preserve the life of Hassan, he knew that he had but one line of conduct to pursue ; and that, painful and humiliating as it was, he could not hope for success through any other means.

Never since his dismission from office had the ex-courtier sought the presence of the Sultan ; he felt that he had been wronged for a new favourite, and he had too much self-respect to expostulate, where he was conscious that expostulation would avail him nothing. And now,

when years had gone by, and, it might be, that his very name was forgotten by Mourad, he was about to present himself at the foot of the throne as a suppliant — as an actor in a wild and questionable drama—as a mad and fool-hardy adventurer.

The resolution of the Defter-dar did not falter for an instant, but his pride revolted, and he sickened under his task, as he bent his way to the Sublime Porte to supplicate an audience of the Sultan. Well was it for him that he came in a fortunate hour; for the court astrologer had predicted that every undertaking of his Imperial master during this auspicious moon should prosper to his heart's content; and, as it chanced that it had hitherto offered little save satiety to the high-hearted monarch, he at once consented to receive his discarded courtier, and to lend a favourable ear to his petition, be it what it might.

But Sultan Mourad, when he so graciously signified his pleasure, looked not to be repaid by a tale so wild and strange as that of the Ex-Treasurer: and he had scarcely heard it to an end

ere he exclaimed earnestly :—“ Bè hèy !—what’s this? Why, it surpasses our most sanguine hopes! There is still adventure to be found in our good city! Why have you been so long absent from our presence, my lord Ex-Treasurer? We have always respected the man, though we . dismissed the minister. And you are to return to the haunts of these young Houri, said you not so? and your friend is to be admitted on your responsibility ?”

“ Light of the World !” replied the Defter-dar, as he still remained prostrate before the Sultan ; “ I was compelled to the promise in order to save my life ; for myself, I have resolved to keep my word ; and it is to crave your sublime approval and assistance that I am now a suppliant in the dust before you—but the fable is at an end : the rest of the adventure must be achieved by force ; for none would venture to share with me the risk of further deception.”

“ Bakalum — we shall see. You forget to whom you speak,” said the excited Mourad ; “ you shall yet play your part, even to the end—you shall still be Ibrahim Effendi, and I will per-

sonate Mechmed Cadirè Ishmail, the manufacturer of diamonds ! Mashallah, it is a good trade, and one that were well worth the learning ! We shall pave our palaces with gold-dust when we have mastered the mystery ! And now, withdraw, Effendim : we have of late had some defalcations in the public treasury, and you bring us a secret so unlooked-for and so welcome, that we owe you an instant demonstration of our gratitude : retire then, Defter-dar, and at sunset return hither, for we shall look for you, and be prepared to start upon our expedition."

The Minister, reinstated at once in the favour of the Sultan and in his long-forfeited dignities, kissed the hem of the sacred garment, and withdrew from the presence to muse over his unexpected good fortune. It was to Nefzi-Sabah that he first confided it ; but gradually the happy intelligence spread through the household, and thence to the world beyond ; and long ere the setting sun warned the restored favourite that the hour had arrived when he was once more to set forth in pursuance of an adventure

which had already so deeply benefited his fortunes, his ante-room was filled with long-oblivious friends, who were suddenly seized with eager and earnest anxiety for his social and bodily welfare !

On arriving at the palace, the Defter-dar was immediately ushered with much ceremony to a private apartment, which he had scarcely entered when he perceived an individual, plainly clad in the common garb of a merchant, advancing towards him ; and he had barely time to bend his forehead to the earth, when the Sultan exclaimed gaily :—“ Rise, Ibrahim, my brother ; with this coarse and somewhat inconvenient garb I have for a time doffed the Padishah. We should now be on our way ; and I can acquaint you as we traverse the city with the plans which I have formed to ensure the success of our undertaking. To our task, then, Ibrahim ! The sun will set ere long ; and you were pledged to return to the hospitable halls of Hemdounè Hanoum ere night-fall.”

The word of Mourad was law ; and the god of day had scarcely dipped his golden hair in the

blue waters of the Bosphorus, when the two disguised merchants beat upon the door of Hassan's prison-house.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DIAMOND MERCHANT—*continued.*

THEY were evidently not expected; for, as on the occasion of the Defter-dar's former visit, they were detained for a considerable time ere the door was cautiously opened; but, at sight of the well-remembered face of the merchant Ibrahim, the slave hastily bade them enter, and as hastily closed the door behind them. The words of his greeting were courteous, but its manner struck both the Sultan and his companion, as dark and threatening; and it was without regret that they obeyed his bidding, and remained alone together in the hall, while he hastened to apprise his mistress of their arrival.

If they had been detained in the street, they

had no cause to complain of delay on the part of the old woman. Only a few seconds had elapsed, ere the rapid shuffling of her slippers was heard in the distance, and the two merchants bent low before her, as she emerged from the long gallery, and stood beside them.

“Khosh geldin—you are welcome;” she exclaimed hastily.

“Khosh bûldûk—well found,” was the ready reply of her visitors, as they repeated the salâm aleikum.

“Why, this is well, Ibrahim, my son;” she said, with a smile whose fierceness she could not wholly conceal; “after having played the truant in such unseemly style, as to give us room to doubt at once your truth and your honesty, you re-appear, according to your promise, when we had abandoned all hope of again receiving you as a guest. And this, then, is the honourable merchant your friend, Mechmed Cadîrè Ishmaïl? He is welcome to my house; and the more so that you are his companion. But come, come;” she added, somewhat impatiently; “the hall is chilly, and we waste time.” Then, as she

moved slowly on before them, attended by the slave bearing a lamp, she muttered in a low voice, which distinctly reached the ear of the Sultan, who was immediately behind her : “ And I am to select a score of stones—a score! poor fools, poor fools—are they not all mine—all?” and a fiendish chuckle and a clenching of the thin bony hands filled up the measure of her meaning.

“ But tell me, Effendim, tell me,” she said, a moment afterwards ; “ you, Ibrahim, my friend, it is to you I speak, and the excellent merchant, your associate, will pardon me that I neglect him for a while—tell me, I pray you, wherefore you fled from my dwelling last night, like one who apprehended evil? Did any offer you insult or annoyance? Did any wild suspicion, or weak alarm, prompt your flight? Tell me honestly, for I hate mystery.”

“ Surely the Hanoum Effendi jests with her slave;” was the reply of the Defter-dar ; “ the cause was too simple to need long seeking. I had an ill dream, which somewhat ruffled me, and, to rid myself of its effects, I passed from

my chamber into the hall, that I might breathe more freely, when I was attracted by the sight of the slothful Saduk. I knew at once that he should keep the door, and I remembered that the safety of Hemdounè Hanoum and her whole household depended on the vigilance of this snoring slave. I did not awaken him, for the thought struck me that I could teach him a lesson more likely to produce amendment than any reproaches ; and accordingly, I resolved, even at some inconvenience to myself, to depart without his assistance, in order to prove to him that his sluggishness might, under some circumstances, have been the cause of mischief. If I did wrong, the Hanoum Effendi will pardon me—as to the slaves who slumber when they should watch, what are they ? haivan der— they are animals ! ”

“ ‘Twas shrewdly done,” said the old crone ; “ a deed after my own heart. I have myself finished the work which you began so bravely ; and there is now no fear that the slave Saduk will ever sleep upon his post again.”

As she uttered the words, the party emerged

from the dark passage along which they had been slowly advancing, and found themselves in a superb saloon, brilliantly lighted, and occupied by half a score of young beauties, among whom the Defter-dar instantly recognized Felech-so. But ere he made his salutation to the bright band, he gave one hurried glance at the old woman, and remarked with satisfaction that every shade of suspicion had vanished from her haggard countenance.

The guests were soon seated on the sumptuous divan, beside their hostess, and supplied with chibouques and coffee by the fair hands of her attendant maidens; and then the impatience of Hemdounè Hanoum became uncontrollable, and she abruptly desired the merchant Mechmed Cadirè Ishmaël to display his diamonds.

The Sultan bowed low, and thrust his hand amid the folds of his girdle, but suddenly withdrew it, and pressed it upon his brow with an expression of acute pain. "Air! air!" he exclaimed convulsively; "Ibrahim, air, or I faint!"

"Quick! quick!" shouted the hostess in her turn; "look that the lattices be firm, and throw

up the casement; see ye not that the Effendi labours for breath."

Felech-so was the first to obey the bidding; she sprang upon the divan with the rapidity of lightning, and flung the wide casement back to its fullest extent; and, as the sweet breath of evening came softly into the apartment, the merchant slowly revived. A goblet of water, tendered to him by one of the ladies, completed his recovery, and he lost no time in gratifying the curiosity of his hostess.

The joy of Hemdounè Hanoum amounted almost to insanity, as her guest spread before her some of the costliest jewels of the Imperial Treasury. Her wasted fingers opened and shut, as though she were already clutching them in spirit; and her eager eyes fastened on them as if she feared their instant disappearance, and would thrall them with a look.

"Gulu * — Zembrut † — Maïtap ‡ — Felech-so—" she exclaimed, addressing the individuals on whom her glance chanced to fall; "we have made a precious harvest to-night! The ransom

* Rose.

† Emerald.

‡ Moonlight.

F 5

of an Emperor ! And now we will waste no more time upon these simple idiots, who have brought their own necks to the bow-string ; " and she was about to clap her hands, to summon some one without, when the Defter-dar seized her forcibly by the arm, as she shouted, " Fools ! Maniacs ! close the casement, if you would not have the kavashlir* upon us, and call hither Mèmish and Ferhat ; are we to be frightened by the impotent violence of two hair-brained madmen ? "

One of the maidens sprang to the window, but she was held back by Felech-so, who had already stationed herself beside it ; and the progress of the others towards the door was arrested by the Sultan, who, as he flung himself across their path, drew a pistol from his girdle, and fired it through the open casement. The report of the shot was answered by a shrill cry from the minaret of a neighbouring mosque ; and the Sultan had scarcely wrenched from the hand of the fiendish old woman a dagger which she had aimed at him, ere the room was full of armed

* City Police.

men. Thick and fast they poured in through the shivered casements on all sides of the dwelling ; and the clatter of their arms, and their shrill cries, as they pursued each other through the intricate passages of the house, sounded fearfully through the silence of the night.

The saloon in which the Sultan stood in this dwelling of darkness presented a singular spectacle as the Janissaries prostrated themselves before him. Strown over the rich Persian carpet were the costly jewels which had been scattered during the struggle of the Dester-dar with the old woman ; in the centre of the floor stood the Sultan, his brow dark, and his eye bright with a terrible meaning. In one corner of the apartment were clustered together a group of lovely girls, splendidly attired, and wan with fear ; while, on the rich sofa of gold and azure, lay the graceful form of Felech-so, one round white arm falling over the edge of the divan, and a slender stream of blood flowing from her bosom to the floor.

The signal shot of the Sultan had been fired

in haste, and the ball had terminated the life of the fair and gentle Felech-so.

My tale is almost told. The wretched Hem-dounè Hanoum was bow-strung by two of her own slaves, who had been made captive by the Janissaries. Coldly and sternly, Mourad, as they were brought trembling before him, inquired of each his name; and then, selecting from the number, Mèmish and Ferhat, who had been destined to the honour of terminating his own existence, he stood by to see his will accomplished. The victim uttered no cry—made no supplication—but submitted to her fate with a recklessness worthy of her impious life; and, as her quivering body was flung down by her executioners, the Sultan bade them conduct him to the prison of Hassan.

The report of Felech-so to the Defter-dar was true in every particular. The vaults beneath the house had been converted into dungeons; where, surrounded by squalour, filth, and wretchedness, loaded with chains, and attenuated by hunger, the Sultan found not only Hassan, but a score of other victims, all young men of wealth or

rank, many of whom had been lost to their families for years.

The joy of the miserable prisoners may be imagined, when they recognized their deliverers. Hassan fell on the neck of the Defter-dar, and wept ; and, as his chains were struck off, he mingled with his gratitude an inquiry for Felechso ; and his tears only flowed the faster when he learnt that she had perished in the service of her affection.

Of the fate of her companions there is no record ; but, as they were Eastern women who had come under the ban of the law, it is not difficult to imagine it ; while it is certain that, in many of the state documents subsequent to this adventure, mention is made of a certain Hassan Pasha, who held a high office of State during the latter part of the reign of Sultan Mourad the Second.*

* Wild, romantic, and improbable, as this tale will appear to European readers, it is nevertheless strictly true ; having been drawn from the archives of the Turkish Empire, and related by Peroussé Hanoum, the Lady Secretary of the Sultana Azmè, for the purpose of being communicated to me, during my residence at Constantinople, in the year 1836. Mourad, or, as he is styled in England, Amurath II., was a prince devoted to adventure, and of great personal courage.

PART II.

CHAPTER IX.

“TAIB! taib!—well done, well done!” exclaimed Carimfil Hanoum, as the fair Massaldjhe ceased speaking; “Y’Allah! ‘tis a wondrous tale, and my ears have drank it in like soft music; but, truly, as you forewarned me, it is somewhat of the saddest. The calam* which traced it must have grown beside a swift river, and been fanned by the breeze of evening; and, ne bilirim—what can I say? methinks that I better love a tale of happier issue.”

* Pen made from a reed.

The young Greek only replied by lifting her instrument from the cushion on which she had laid it when she commenced her narrative, and smiling archly at her friend, as, with rapid utterance, she poured forth the following ballad.

THE LOST ONE.

"The winds of our mountains, how gladsome they are;
But the voice of my lov'd one is sweeter by far,
As on his swift Arab, as bright as the day,
He comes from my bondage to bear me away.

"They have wreath'd my dark tresses with blossom and gem,
But my heart has no fondness to lavish on them;
I was sought by a stranger—they made me his bride,
And my free spirit pines in its passionate pride.

"Speed! speed! to the rider who comes like the wind;
Whom no peril can daunt, and no fetter can bind;"—
So sang the sweet voice which we welcome no more,
For the bride of the stranger has fled with the giaour!

"Enough, khatoun—darling;" said the fair Circassian in a low whisper, as a deep blush mantled her brow and bosom; "I like your ballad even less than your history, for it tells a tale to which it is sin to listen."

" I have done ;" smiled her companion, " and now we will hearken to the fall of the fountains, the murmuring of the wind in the mimosa trees, and the song of the caged birds ; for, truly, they make sweet music."

Not long, however, had the fair friends resigned themselves in silence to the calm beauty of the hour, and the train of thought which it engendered, when a slave approached with intimation that the Pasha purposed paying a visit to the harem after the evening meal ; and, his wife having signified her readiness to receive him, the ladies shortly afterwards removed to another apartment, in which the supper had been spread by their attendants.

Cushions of delicate pink satin, sprinkled with golden stars, were placed beside the silver tray on which the meal was to be served ; napkins of muslin, as white and fine as gossamer, exquisitely embroidered and fringed with coloured silks and silver, were laid carefully across their knees and over their arms ; tepid rose-water, poured from a richly gilded vase into a basin of the same material, was showered upon their

white and taper fingers, and the repast commenced.

A line of slaves, extending from the low tray to the door of the apartment, passed the dishes, which were served singly, from hand to hand ; the one nearest to her mistress setting it down before her upon her knees.

Not a word was spoken as the meal proceeded, which was accompanied by the voices of half a dozen slave-girls grouped together at the extreme end of the room. There were the delicate keftas, balls of highly seasoned force-meat ; tchalva, a dish made of flour, honey, and oil ; kaimack, an exquisite preparation of thickened cream ; moalibè, a species of inferior blanc mange, much prized by the Orientals, and eaten with powdered sugar and rose-water ; kibaubs of lamb, served up on skewers of jasmine wood ; kubeh, spiced meat, minced, and rolled in vine-leaves, baked crisp ; dolmas, a similar preparation stewed in cream ; tchorba, or soup of several descriptions ; dried beef, prepared with garlick, the Turkish substitute for ham ; and all the various provocatives to appetite which fill

up the measure of an Oriental repast; and, lastly, the national pillauf, richly coloured with tomato juice, and flavoured with quails. Sherbets and coffee succeeded: and, having once more bathed their fair hands in perfumed water, Carimfil Hanoum and her Greek friend returned to the garden saloon to await the coming of the Pasha.

The sun was just setting, and the tall sycamores which bounded the view were gleaming in gold and orange; while, as the rays fell upon the noble sheet of water immediately below the casement, they shed a soft pink tint upon the marble basin, and over the pale blossoms of the lotus flowers.

“ How fair must this sweet evening close upon the mountains of my beloved land ! ” sighed out the beautiful Circassian; “ can you not picture to yourself, Katinka mou, the glory of this rich light flung over the blessed valley, where—— ”

But the kadeun* had no time to localise her picture; for, as she was speaking, the tapestry

* Lady.

curtain of the inner door was lifted by a couple of negro slaves, and the Pasha entered the apartment.

“ Salām aleikum,” said the Satrap, as the ladies rose to receive him.

“ Aleikum Salām,” replied his wife, as he advanced towards the sofa; while the Greek, retiring a few paces, stood silent in an attitude of deep respect.

“ Keifiniz ayi me — is your humour good ? ” asked the Pasha, as his young wife bent her knee, and pressed his hand to her lips and brow.

“ Guzel — good ;” was the answer; “ my lord has brought joy to the heart of his slave, for he has restored to her the sister of her soul.”

The Satrap glanced for the first time towards Katinka : “ Approach, kizem — my daughter ;” he said kindly; “ I have much to thank you for, when I see the bloom and the light restored to this jewel of my existence ; you have been a skilful physician : every hakeem whom I have hitherto consulted has been an ass and the father of asses ; but you have brought back joy

to my harem, as the dawn brings back light. Who has taught you a skill valuable as the precepts of the Korân, and sure as the Paradise of the Prophet? How is it that, while the wise men of the land have heaped upon my head the dirt of disappointment, you have spread for my feet the carpet of content?"

"Allah buyûk der — the Kadeun Hanoum has rejoiced in my minstrelsy, and we have broken together the spiced bread of memory ;" was the reply. "The heart, when it is sad, ever loves to fall back upon the past; the river may flow through many valleys, but its waters have all been fed from the same source, and they cannot change their nature."

"And yet, what is the past?" said the Satrap philosophically, as he took from the hand of an attendant his richly ornamented chibouque, of which the boudaka, or bowl, was curiously gilt and painted; "is it not bosh—nothing! The song that has been sung, the tale that has been told, the sherbet that has been drank, what avail they? Bashustun—On my head be it! They are even less than nought—I have said it."

“ Otour, janum — Sit, my soul ;” was his next exclamation, as he withdrew for an instant the chibouque from his lips, and turned towards his wife ; and when, profiting by this gracious permission, she had placed herself on the extreme edge of the sofa on which he was comfortably established, a motion of the hand implied a similar command to the young Greek, who obeyed it by taking her place on a pile of cushions at the feet of her friend.

“ Bèyaz ;” said the Satrap a moment after as he looked up ; “ I have been searching for the cause of your vaunted cleverness, and I find not in the chambers of my brain one with which I can feel satisfied. Hai—true, you are a Greek, and the women of your nation are content to turn over the leaves of knowledge, and to trace the characters of communication themselves, while the fair inmates of our harems —Alhemdullilah—praise be to Allah ! sit quietly upon their sofas, and, for a few piastres, purchase the labours of others ; but you do more than this—you are as a daughter of Frangistan —as a sister of the Unbelievers, who walk the

streets with their faces naked, and pour dust upon the heads of the karabashes, the wise men of our country, who double up their feet upon the sofa of science, and pour the sherbet of study into the goblet of learning. Mashallah ! Frangi domous—the Franks are hogs—and their women are the sisters of Sheitan, and the hand-maidens of Eblis !” and the Pasha spat upon the carpet, overcome at once by indignation and fatigue.

“ The women of the Franks, what are they, that we should talk of them ?” asked the Circassian. “ Do not their own husbands hold them so lightly that they may come and go as they list, and receive strange men in their harems, and sit at meat with them unrebuked ? Are they not giaours and unbelievers ?”

“ Taib—well said ; why should we talk of them, guzum, my eyes !” replied the Pasha ; “ are they not as almè,* wandering from house to house unveiled, and smiling upon every beyzadeh† who smokes from the chibouque of their husband ? Ajaib !—wonderful !”

* Dancing girls.

† Son of a Lord.

"Have you ever looked upon one of these unhappy ones?" asked the Hanoum anxiously.

"But once, janum, and that was at Stamboul, before I took possession of my pashalik ; and, ouf!" — and again he assumed an expression of intense disgust. "She had neither turban upon her head, nor henna upon her hands! When I peered at her from behind a curtain, for I would not enter her apartment, she had a Frankish calam in her hand, and she was tracing upon the leaf of an open volume a knot of flowers that was lying before her ; and I swear by the Korān that I could scarcely tell the precise blossom to which the prophet had given life. Who could breathe the breath of peace in a harem where his women could laugh at him to his beard ?"

"Mashallah ! who indeed ?" murmured the young wife ; and for a time there was silence.

Katinka, whose zebec lay beside her, wearied of the dull common-places to which she had been so long compelled to listen, swept her

hand across the strings of her instrument, and at once changed the current of the Pasha's thoughts.

"Pekahi—very well," he said, smilingly, "be it so—we will have music." And, without further bidding, the maiden poured forth one of the wild melodies of her country.

"I have been thinking of you as you sang;" said the Satrap, as the strain ceased, and the young Greek remained with her head bent over the zebec, to conceal the large tears that were standing in her eyes; "and as I have no more important occupation than to listen, I would fain hear your history, and terminate a perplexity of which it fatigues me to attempt the solution. Do I say well, Carimfil, janum, shall she tell us the tale of her life?"

"As my lord wills;" said the Circassian in a low melancholy accent; "she lives but to obey you."

The young Greek passed her hand before her eyes, flung back the clustering braids which had fallen over her face, and, after having

continued silent for a moment, turned a long speaking look upon her friend, and commenced her story.

CHAPTER X.

“ I AM a native of Scio, of that delicious island which, mirrored in the clear waters of the Egean, and rich in all the prodigal gifts of nature, appeared to have sprung from the blue depths of ocean to give to man a renewed glimpse of the forfeited but unforgotten Eden. I dare not detail to my lord, as my Greek heart would dictate, all the horrors to which my birth-place became a prey. Again the serpent stole upon the calm happiness of innocence ; and again man was driven out into the wilderness of the world ; but this time it was with blood and tears——”

“ Mashallah !” broke in the Pasha ; “ if you

put so many words to the firing of a town and the murder of a few thousand revolted Greeks, your narrative is likely to last to the next Ramazan! But go on; it may perchance mend as you proceed—Bakalum—we shall see."

"The cry of blood rose to Heaven;" pursued Katinka, heedless of the interruption, and rather speaking to herself than addressing the Pasha; "and in Heaven's good time it will be answered! How many happy ones did a brief day make orphans! Shrieks and groans rang through the groves which had so lately resounded with laughter and music; and the graceful limbs that had led the romaika under the shade of the tall sycamore and the drooping *afsaf*,* lay maimed and bleeding by the way-side. All was terror and dismay; and my affrighted mother, seizing with frantic haste my brother and myself by the hand, hurried us along by-paths little frequented, and quite unknown to our enemies, to a cavern in the rock, which had already afforded refuge to a score of other fugitives. Meanwhile the flames of

* Egyptian willow.

the burning villages rose into the air in volumes, and the occasional discharge of musketry continued throughout the night. My mother sat upon the ground, with her head buried on her knees, my brother was beside her, and I lay at her feet, and slept, overcome by fatigue and terror.

“ Through the agency of a relative, who lost his wife and children during the massacre, after four tedious and miserable days spent in the cavern, during which we subsisted on shell-fish and wild berries, collected by the boldest of the wretched company during the night ; we escaped in the frail bark of a fisherman, whom the hope of gain had induced to hover about the island, and who landed us ere the day was spent on a bleak rock, where we continued until we could safely transport ourselves to Athens ; our faithful fisherman supplying us with food, and ultimately informing the friends to whom we were anxious to be conveyed, of our destitute and miserable condition.

“ Landed in Greece, we were in comparative security ; and the uncle of my mother, a wealthy merchant, without any nearer relatives than

ourselves, lavished upon us every luxury which his affection could procure or devise ; but my poor mother's heart was broken ; and, while I was yet a child, she was laid beneath an acacia tree to rest.

“ We were now wholly dependent on Age Aneste, our uncle, and we became to him as children ; all the advantages that gold could secure he poured forth upon us ; but even that effort would not satisfy his love. We were about to be transported to Frangistan, to a seaport of the Gauls, touching on the gulf of Genoa, and there——”

“ Y' Allah ! — in the name of the Prophet, how say you ? Have you been in the land of the infidel ? ” exclaimed the Pasha, suddenly aroused from his indifference ; “ know you not that the country of the Unbelievers is but a menzil khaneh, a post-house, on the road to Je-hanum ? ”

“ Shekiur Allah ! —heaven be praised, the sole of my foot has never been polluted by treading the soil of the giaour ; ” replied the young Greek, with a quiet smile. “ I was about to inform your

highness that the felucca was at anchor before the city, when a Frank stranger arrived with his only child at the house of one whom Age Aneste loved, and in whose company he passed a great portion of his time. When they landed in Greece, it was evident to all who looked upon the stranger that he had come there only to die. His eye burnt with a fierce light which was almost dazzling, and there was a bloom upon his cheek better suited to a stripling than to one whose head was white with the snows of age. The Frank was devoured by the disease which is the plague of his country ; and the hakeems of his own land had sent him forth in despair from the fogs and snows of his unhappy clime to our more genial East ; he had passed rapidly from one fair island to another, with the restlessness of his disease and of his people ; until, feeling that the angel Azraël was rapidly folding his wings about him, he resolved to visit Greece, though well he knew that it must be his burial-place.

“ I have spoken of his child—it was a daughter, with eyes like the blue heaven that floods the

world with beauty, and hair as golden as the last rays of the setting sun. Alas ! she hoped on to the last ; and, when Allah at length recalled the breath that he had given, and she was left alone, she prayed in her anguish that the same stone might cover them. She lived on, however, for the prayer of the bursting heart was set aside in mercy ; and she became an inmate of my uncle's house. From her I learnt the lore of the Franks, and, when she at length followed her father to the grave — for the poisoned shaft which had struck down the strong man lurked also in the veins of the golden-haired child of his love—we mourned for her as though she had been of our own blood.

“ Affairs of commerce calling Age Aneste to Circassia, he determined, in order to remove the melancholy which had fastened vampire-like upon my heart, to carry my brother and myself with him upon his interesting expedition. Then and there it was, your highness, that, for a few brief and happy months I enjoyed the friendship of the beautiful Carimfil Hanoum, whom may Allah long preserve in loveliness ! When his

affairs were settled, my uncle pined for his own land, and the familiar comforts of his own roof ; but my brother's bolder spirit had become enamoured of the mountain life, and the generous hospitality of Circassia, and he resolved to follow out his fortunes in the war which the brave mountaineers were waging against the Muscovites. Heaven was merciful, for, on our return to Athens, our felucca was taken by a Turkish vessel ; my unhappy uncle died like a brave Greek, with his weapon in his hand ; and, for myself,—and the voice of the maiden faltered, and the bitter tears of anguish fell upon her bosom—“ I am pursuing my destiny —nursed in blood, and reared in exile, I am now wearing away my youth in slavery——”

“ Nay, not so, khatoun ; ” exclaimed the Circassian, throwing her white arms about her friend, heedless of the presence of the Pasha ; “ your sorrows now are ended, your life shall be one of sunshine, and they who oppress or injure you shall be the enemies of the Satrap.”

“ Taib—well said : ” echoed Saifula Pasha ; “ I will pluck out their beards, and fill their

nostrile with ashes. But we have had enough of grief—let your slaves be summoned, Effen-dimou, that the dance may dry up your tears, which are pouring out like the fountains of the desert. Inshallah ! I would rather see the flowers when the sunshine rests upon them, than when the shower falls heavy on their heads, and bends them earthward."

Carimfil Hanoum clapped her hands, and the dancing girls of her harem speedily entered, greatly to the satisfaction of the Satrap ; who, when he commanded the narration of Katinka, had by no means anticipated so gloomy a history ; and who was far better amused by the monotonous twanging of the wiry Turkish mandolins, and the meaningless movements of the slaves, than he would have been by all the fables of the wily Scheherazade herself.

To the dance succeeded a shrill chorus of voices, sufficient to have cracked the drums of any ears save those of an Osmanli ; and, when the musicians had performed their prostrations, and quitted the apartment, Carimfil Hanoum, anxious to reinstate her friend in the good

graces of her husband, whose favour had evidently been much lessened by the saddening nature of her story, by which he had nearly been put to sleep, and, at the same time to diminish its effect upon her own spirits, roused herself by a violent effort, and said laughingly—

“ The moon is as bright to-night as the sword of the Padishah—’tis an hour for a love-tale; aye, and one of happy issue. Have you none such, guzum? Bak—see! you have but to look at those threads of silver flung over the leaves like a net-work, in order to weave a thousand gladsome fancies, and to dispel at once the gloom of the Satrap, who has done nought but sigh since the singing women left the apartment.”

“ Guzel! guzel! — good, good! ” smiled the Pasha, “ ’tis a good thought, janum—my soul : but we will have no more revolts, nor pirates, nor Frank women wandering into far lands to die, instead of waiting quietly upon their sofas the coming of Azraël ; as they would have done, had they covered their faces, and not eaten dirt from their childhood. But first” — and he clapped his hands, and said gravely to the negro

who answered the summons, “ Chibouque, cah-veh getir — bring pipes and coffee ; ” ere he turned gaily towards the young Greek, and added, with a self-gratulatory chuckle at his own wit. “ First pass the sponge of oblivion over the parchment of memory, and fold your feet upon the cushion of delight ; for if you fail to make me laugh ere I leave the harem, I will condemn you to prepare your pillauf with green rice ; so let your words be your slaves, that they may make smiles as plentiful in my harem as roses in the gardens of Nishapor.”

The fair Greek bowed her head, and laid her hand upon her heart and lips ; and, when the cafejhis had retired, prepared to obey the Pasha by relating the story of—

CHAPTER XI.

THE SEVEN DOORS.

Not above a hundred years ago, there lived in the city of Stamboul, near the mosque of Sultan Bajazet, a shawl merchant named Suleiman, to whom the Prophet had been auspicious, and who had consequently accumulated immense wealth. For sixty-five years he had been content to see his harem occupied only by his very aged mother and her slaves ; but at the termination of that period, as he was one day sitting in the Shawl Bazār, his attention was attracted by the stately form and graceful carriage of a female, who paused for a moment beside his carpet to examine a magnificent cachemire of Lahore, which he was in the act of

displaying to a Frank customer, and then hastily passed on, attended by a slave.

The Frank purchased the shawl, and the bright eyes of the fair pedestrian had so far favoured him, that he did not pay above a thousand piastres more than its value ; Suleiman having, in his temporary bewilderment of spirit, named to the Giaour the very sum which he would have demanded of a True Believer ; and, when the merchant had carefully deposited the gold in his tobacco purse instead of the more legitimate receptacle destined for his gains, and had inhaled in silence the aroma of a newly-replenished chibouque, he was aroused from his fit of musing by the voice of his neighbour Najib, an Adrianopolitan by birth, and, like himself, a shawl merchant by profession, who had witnessed the bargain with some surprise ; but with that quiet philosophy of non-interference common in the East.

“ Allah moutèyemmin èilèyè—Allah grant that it may be of good omen to you : ” he said calmly. “ The dog of an infidel was ready with his gold, and paid it fairly ; but you, me-

thinks, were somewhat over-hasty on your side, or you might have counted it up to a heavier sum. Even the light-footed daughter of old Abdullah, the silversmith, stopped for a moment as she passed, in wonder at your fair dealing with a Giaour."

" Mashallah — Allah be praised — the eye must be keen that pierces the folds of a yashmac,"* retorted the other, thoroughly aroused by the subject; " How know you, Effendim, that Abdullah has a daughter? or that the girl who just walked through the bazaar was his child?"

" To your first question, I answer that my wife asked her for our son Hafiz, but it was not his kismet — his fate — to be pleasing in the eyes of the old man; and to the second, that the negress who followed her was reared in my own harem, and bade ' God guard me,' as she stepped beside my carpet."

Suleiman smoked on after this short dialogue in silence: a new idea had sprung into existence in his mind; and he remained quietly revolving the subject until an hour before sunset, at which

* Veil worn by Turkish women.

period the tcharchi* closes ; when, having exhausted his last pipe, he rolled up his carpet, secured his costly merchandise, and walked slowly homeward.

"It is my felech — my constellation" — he murmured to himself, as he cast off his slippers at the door of the harem, and proceeded to pay a visit to his mother ; "What is to be, will be !" And having indulged in this consolatory and soothing reflection, Suleiman the shawl merchant philosophically resigned himself to his fate ! "Allah kerim—Allah is merciful"—he said quietly, as he took possession of a cushion near the sofa on which his aged and widowed parent sat supported by pillows : "Allah kerim —my home has hitherto been one of solitude, and the hair of my mother has grown gray with years ; and as yet she has had no daughter to pour water into her goblet, nor coffee into her cup—but this must not be for ever—I have said it."

"Allah kerim !" echoed the old woman in her turn : "the Prophet has heard my prayer. I

* Great Exchange.

will see Hamet the slave-merchant, before the set of to-morrow's sun."

" Nay, not so ;" was the reply ; " I have heard that Abdullah the silversmith, he who wrought the mangal* for the Sultan's new palace, hath a daughter ; men speak well of him, and his beard is white. I will marry the girl."

" Pekahi — very well " answered the aged crone : " then will I see the Hanoum, her mother ; the Imaum shall be warned ; and next week her foot shall be on your threshold."

" Abdullah hath refused her to Hafiz, the son of Najib ;" observed the suitor with a sudden misgiving.

" And what of that ? " asked his mother sharply ; " is it not bosh — nothing ? Hafiz is a mere boy, and the camel is not yet foaled which will carry him to Mecca."

Even on the morrow did Gunduz Hanoum (for thus was the mother of Suleiman called — Gunduz signifying Daylight, though the sun of her mortal sky had long been set, and her existence dwindled away into a mere gloaming ;

* A brazier for holding heated charcoal.

and Hanoum, being translated, reading as lady or mistress :) even on the morrow did she set forward upon her interesting errand. Nor had the aged ambassadress the most remote doubt as to the success of her mission : true, the silversmith had refused to give the maiden to Hafiz, the first-born of Najib, the Adrianopolitan ; but Najib was not a man of substance, and the son fed only upon his father's fortunes ; while Suleiman——

It was at this point of her musing that the araba, or latticed carriage, of Gunduz Hanoum stopped before the harem of the mother of Hafiz ; and when the arabajhe had beaten upon the door, and it had been opened by some invisible means from within, her slaves slowly lifted her from her cushions, and bore her into the hall of Abdullah's house, whence she was supported up stairs ; and, having traversed a wide corridor surrounded by the women's apartments, she was ushered into the principal room of the harem, and the presence of its mistress.

" Boūroum —you are welcome ; " said the lady, rising courteously from her sofa, as the

guest entered ; and she motioned the decrepid old woman to the place of honour ; " You are welcome, though I know not whence you are, nor on what errand you come." And while the visiter, having put off her slippers, settled herself comfortably at the upper end of the divan, she clapped her hands, and a slave entered with coffee.

Long sat the two women side by side in silence; and, when the coffee had disappeared, the wife of Abdullah prepared a chibouque for her guest, and, having duly placed on the summit of the tobacco a small piece of lighted charcoal, she offered the pipe to her visiter with her own hands, who received it with a courteous salām aleikum.*

" You are the wife of Abdullah the silversmith"—commenced the old woman at length, after she had imbibed the aroma of the tobacco, and that the raised circle of light white ashes had formed round the bowl of the chibouque, which betrays that the virtue of the 'scented weed' is well nigh evaporated ; " you are the

* Eastern salutation.

wife of Abdullah the silversmith, and I am the mother of Suleiman the shawl merchant, who lives within the shadow of the mosque of Sultan Bajazet — you have a fair daughter ; and my son is one who can well afford to flavour his pilauf with spices——do I speak clearly ?”

“ You speak clearly ;” responded her auditor without the slightest gesture of surprise, and drawing as she spoke a longer stream of vapour through the slender pipe of jasmine wood which she was herself smoking.

“ I would see the girl ;” followed up the old woman.

“ And why not ?” readily rejoined her new acquaintance ; “ Alhemdullilah — Praise be to Allah — she has eyes like oysters, and lips as ruddy as the dye of Khorasan — why should I bid her hide herself when a mussafir — a guest, desires to look upon her ?”

And again she clapped her hands, and, on the entrance of an attendant, bade her summon *Helmas Hanoum* to her presence.

The maiden obeyed without delay ; and even as she made her graceful obeisance at the thresh-

old, ere she advanced deeper into the apartment, the keen eye of the old woman had detected in her intended daughter-in-law all the charms which she had silently settled in her own mind to be imperative and indispensable in the wife of her son. She was indeed, as her name implied, a “diamond” among women; she had the height and grace of her Georgian mother, but her eye and brow were those of her Turkish father. It may seem somewhat apocryphal to dilate on eyes which her own parent had just likened to so utterly unsentimental an object in natural history as an oyster; but the simile will nevertheless bear analysis as well as most — her eyes were full, and round, and clear, and, moreover, deeply fringed with lashes as black as night—she was pale, very pale; but ere the visit of Suleiman’s mother ended, her cheek had flushed into a dye that would have shamed the roses of Gurgistan; her long dark hair fell in masses upon shoulders as white and polished as ivory; and she moved with a grace that lent a new charm to her beauty.

“Inshallàh — I trust in Allah — she is no

Kurd ;” said the wife of Abdullah, as the lovely Helmas Hanoum raised the withered hand of the visiter to her lips : “ she is worthy to be the wife of a True Believer.”

“ She is worthy”—echoed the other high contracting party, without removing her sharp gray eyes from the countenance of the fair girl ; “ she shall be the wife of Suleiman, even of my own son.”

The maiden started painfully, and raised her downcast eyes with an expression of acute suffering ; her lip trembled, but she did not venture to give voice to the words that quivered there ; and she almost bounded from the room as her mother bade her retire.

The declaration of Gunduz Hanoum was fulfilled to the letter ; one short week beheld the young and lovely daughter of Abdullah the wife of Suleiman the shawl merchant. She wept bitterly as she was borne into the harem ; and she closed her eyes as the dancing girls moved along before her, and turned aside her head as the singing women pealed forth her bridal song. In short, it avails not to make a

secret of that which her husband was not slow to discover; the peerless Helmas Hanoum had given away her heart ere the aged mother of Suleiman went on her matrimonial mission to the harem of Abdullah the silversmith.

But who was the favoured lover? Who should say? In taking a wife, the worthy Shawl-merchant had secured at once a misery and a mystery. He sought to win the secret by tenderness; but the sentiment of sixty-five long years, written in wrinkles on the brow of a new made husband, is no key to open the heart of a young, and pretty, and pre-occupied wife. The Hanoum, his mother, endeavoured to gain her point by taunts and menaces, but she was only answered by tears, from which nothing could be learned save that there *was* a secret; and this only made the matter worse.

How many sleepless nights did the unhappy Suleiman pass in vain endeavours to remedy an evil whose exact cause he could not even fathom! And how often did he swear to himself by the beard of the Prophet that he would outmatch in cunning every lover in Stamboul, though they

should be leagued with Sheitan to do him wrong.

For one whole weary month he sat in the bazar, apparently gazing on the passers-by, but in reality with his eyes turned inward, and his thoughts plotting treason against his liege lady and wife. At length the electric spark was struck, and the luminous atom grew into breadth and form — it is true that for a time the breath of the loving husband came thick and hard as he revolved the different bearings of his scheme, but the more he reflected, the more he became reconciled to the idea ; and when, in a private conference with his mother, it had received her sanction and approval, he hesitated no longer to prepare an effectual remedy against all lover-like stratagems on the part of his unknown rival.

Beneath the house of Suleiman was excavated a vault of some extent, which, with considerable labour, was fashioned by the jealous merchant into a spacious and comfortable apartment, save that the light of heaven could not penetrate its gloom ; and this subterranean was approached by a long vaulted passage, along which, for bet-

ter security, he placed, at regular distances, seven doors strongly plated with iron and fastened with locks, each different from the other, and to be opened only by the key that appertained to it.

The surprize of the young wife may be imagined when she was introduced into this living grave, and told that it was to be thenceforward her abiding place. She wept, she knelt, she even shrieked in her anguish, but the heart of Suleiman was steeled by jealousy, and tardily-awakened love. Nor, as he took some trouble to explain, would she be so much to be pitied as she seemed to apprehend, for, with the exception of light, liberty, and fresh air, nothing in reason would be denied to her. But the young beauty was deaf to all his rhetoric ; she saw only in the subterranean, in which she was to be immured with the faithful negress who had followed her from her father's house, at once a prison and a tomb ; nor did the passionate protestations of her husband reconcile her in the slightest degree to his very original arrangement. Never were the inconveniences of excessive attachment more strongly developed ; and after an hour uselessly

expended in sententious consolation, the merchant was fain to ascend to the level of the earth, leaving his lovely victim bathed in tears of most sincere distress.

Now it so chanced, that the house adjoining that of Suleiman the shawl merchant had long been uninhabited, and was likely to continue so, for the window panes were shivered, the roof had fallen in, in many places, and the suns of summer and the rains of winter had combined to render it as forlorn and uninviting as any tenement could well be; and the Merchant congratulated himself that it was so, for the grief and terror of his young wife had been more vociferous and demonstrative than he had anticipated; and he felt all the inconvenience which might have accrued to himself from a possible interference on the part of a neighbour.

Were this the time or place for moralizing, or were the habit of so doing more popular than it is, I might be tempted at this period of my story to pause a little, and to remark on the proneness of purblind human nature to exult over the very circumstances which are

frequently the most inimical to the success of its projects ; but as it is, I will not indulge myself with digression ; and this resolution brings me back at once to the prison-chamber of the fair and ill-fated Helmas Hanoum.

“ What care I for my beauty !” she exclaimed peevishly, cutting short the anxious exhortations of her attendant, who sat on a cushion at her feet ; “ I detest the very atmosphere he breathes. Tchiffût — wretch ! Shall I braid my hair for him, and stain my hands with henna to give him pleasure ? If I am mad, let him send me to the Timerhazè ;* there at least I shall feel the breath of Heaven, and look on the blue sky— And soon, soon ; ” she added, with a fresh burst of passionate grief ; “ I shall be fitted only for such a home.”

Time wore on heavily enough in the subterranean, though Suleiman rarely failed to visit each day the lady of his heart, who met his affection either in sullen silence, or with vehement reproach ; but a Turkish husband cares little for a storm of words—it is only a woman—she must

* Lunatic Asylum.

be suffered to say all that she lists—her anger is bosh, nothing—she is better when she has poured forth her dissatisfaction; and upon this principle listened the husband of the incarcerated fair one, without swerving one iota from his purpose; and upon this principle he bore the tempest meekly; and consoled himself by double locking each of the seven doors, as he re-ascended to the light, and never suffering the precious keys to be deposited elsewhere than amid the folds of the shawl that he wore about his waist.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SEVEN DOORS.—*continued.*

SIX weary weeks had passed since Helmas Hanoum first became the tenant of the vault, when, as she sat one day listlessly passing the beads of her chaplet through her slender fingers, she detected a strange noise in a corner of the subterranean ; and so much was she perplexed to define its cause, that she awoke her companion, who lay sleeping peacefully upon a mat thrown on the floor, not half a dozen paces from her sofa : “ Wake, Zeïnip ! wake, I say !” she cried impatiently ; “ Ne var—what is that ? some one is in the apartment.”

“ Affiet ollah—much pleasure attend you—we shall then see a new face ;” said the negress quietly, as she passed her hand over her eyes, and rose to a sitting posture ; “ But where, Ef-

fendim, is the muassafir ?* Bir chey yok—there is nothing; we are still alone as when I lay down to sleep."

"Yavash, yavash — softly, softly ;" whispered the imprisoned beauty, pressing her finger on her lip; "hear you nothing?"

"Nothing, save a rat who has lost his way in the dark, and would fain take a short cut through our under-ground harem. Hahi ! the Prophet pardon you, Effendim, for you have spoiled the sweetest dream that has gladdened my sleeping hours since——"

"Hist ! I tell you, 'tis no rat; now Allah shield us ! what can it mean?"

The slave, seeing the terror of her mistress, and being by this time wide awake, listened in her turn. In five seconds she decided that her first guess had been a correct one, but in five minutes she confessed that such could not be the case. And, in truth, it was not wonderful that the two incarcerated women should instinctively draw closer together, and throw their whole souls—for the Turks have always allowed that their women have souls, whatever it may have pleased Euro-

* Guest.

peans to declare to the contrary—and throw their whole souls into their ears, as the mysterious noise continued with scarcely any intermission. It was not precisely a knocking, nor quite a scratching, nor altogether a grinding; it was a strange irregular compound of each and all of these; and the only decision to which Helmas Hanoum and her ebony-coloured attendant could come on the subject, was, that some person or thing was striving to make a way into the vault.

Having arrived at this conclusion, their terror began after a time to grow into curiosity. What could it be? What could it mean? The young beauty looked towards her slave, and murmured out “If it should be my father!—” and the slave in her turn looked towards her mistress, and in a tone as low as the last whispering of the wind on the ocean-ripple, replied to the suggestion by slowly saying “If it should be your lover!”

The sentence was no sedative, for the cheek of the young wife crimsoned, and her heart began to beat painfully; and meanwhile the knocking, scratching, and grinding went on with an indefatigability which did infinite credit to the per-

severance of the operator. The upper end of the vault, where it touched the subterranean of the adjoining dwelling, was secured by some of those huge blocks of stone which are frequently to be seen in the most ancient quarters of Stamboul, and seem to have been hewn by the Titans; they were, moreover, united by that mysterious, and almost indestructible cement, of which the secret is now supposed to be lost ; and, altogether, no jealous husband could possibly have devised a more solid or satisfactory species of partition between his own house and that of his neighbour. But what avail even blocks of stone, or Roman cement, against the resolute determination of headstrong passion ? The complicated noise went on day after day, until the two prisoners became so thoroughly accustomed to it, that it was no longer a cause of fear, though, amid the monotony of their existence, it still remained a subject of curiosity and conversation.

It was somewhat remarkable that the invisible workman, as though gifted with the power of seeing through the stone that he found it so dif-

ficult to penetrate, never continued his labours during the daily visits of the Merchant ; the instant that the key of Suleiman turned in the lock of the seventh door, all was as still as the grave ; and perhaps it was equally strange, that neither of the women ever volunteered to the Merchant the slightest mention of the circumstance. It might be that in the excitement of his reception it escaped their memory : or it might be that they considered the incident to be altogether insignificant, and therefore unworthy of attention. I cannot take upon myself to explain their motive, but, be it what it would, it shrouded itself in silence.

It will readily be believed by those who have the advantage of Suleiman, and who are in possession of the secret, that the noise became gradually louder as the work advanced ; and that, when once a huge stone was displaced from its legitimate position, the two trembling women —for they *did* tremble more violently than ever when they saw the loosened mass actually yield to some external force—were “all eyes,” as they had long been “all ears,” to discover the cause

of the mystery. Helmas Hanoum was the first to recover from her panic, as a very handsome head appeared in the chasm, which was quickly succeeded by a tall, slight, graceful figure, that, having passed the narrow space with some difficulty, started suddenly into a standing posture; and then, quick as thought, was prostrate once more at the feet of the young beauty.

“Hafiz!” murmured the low voice of the merchant’s wife.

“My fair, my loved, my long-lost houri!” answered the youth, as he covered her small hand with kisses: “Sultana of my soul! Was it for this that they refused you to me—to bury you beneath the earth ere the Prophet had beckoned back your spirit? Was it for this?” and tears of mingled joy and bitterness swelled in his large dark eyes.

“It is my fate!” said Helmas Hanoum mournfully: “it is my fate; and you have done ill, Hafiz, to seek me out. Was I not sad enough in my loneliness that you bring me a deeper grief? Ne bilirim—what can I say? You are a madman!”

“ The nightingale sings to the rose when the sun has set ;” was the meek reply : “ I have learnt a lesson of a silly bird ; and shall I be chidden by the flower which has won my worship ? ”

“ If I chid you not in brighter days ;” said the weeping beauty ; “ how could I chide you now ? And yet, Hafiz—— ”

“ Ai guzum ! janum ! —oh, my eyes ! my soul ! ” commenced the lover——

“ Enough, enough of this ;” interposed the slave abruptly : “ we lose time—you love each other—a way of escape is open ; let us fly to the mountains.”

“ Peace, Zeinip ! ” said her mistress sternly : “ am I not the wife of Suleiman ? ”

“ You are a child”— retorted the negress unceremoniously ; “ see you not that the young Effendi is your felech—your constellation ? Will you put out the light of your own star ? Will you blacken your face because your father sold you to a greybeard’s gold ? and eat dirt with him when you may share the pillauf of one who loves you ? ”

And as the energetic Zeïnip paused for breath, Hafiz looked up at the trembling girl, and whispered ; “ She says well — will you indeed do this ? ”

“ Listen to me ! ” said Helmas Hanoum, who at once perceived that she should have to contend with the pleadings of her own heart, as well as those of both her companions ; and who was anxious to gain time, lest, in this first moment of happy emotion, she might be induced to take a step, against which reason and propriety alike revolted ; and, with the ready tact of her sex in all countries, and under all circumstances, she adopted at once the tone and manner best fitted to win her lover to a compliance with her conditions. Like the evil enchanters of the East, and the spoiled beauties of every land, she insisted on the performance of feats which she affected to believe impossible, but on whose accomplishment she bound herself to unite her fate with that of Hafiz, and to fly with him from Stamboul for ever.

In vain did the young man argue, expostulate, and plead ; he wasted alike his time and his elo-

quence, for Helmas Hanoum was firm. “ I have said it, Hafiz, and thus only may you hope to win me ; remember, too, for how many weary weeks I have been buried here, and shall I not be revenged upon my tormentor ? Between the entrance of the vault and this apartment there are seven doors, and so many times must you deceive Suleiman in some wise, so thoroughly that he may believe himself the sport of a foul fiend without having power to free himself from the thrall ; and you must, moreover, so conduct your machinations as to make me a party in every plot. You need not doubt but I shall play my part well, and my faithful Zeïnip also——”

“ Have I not grown up with him from a child ? ” interposed the negress ; “ and will not my heart be with him while he walks the earth ? Inshallâh—I shall not mar his plotting.”

After a time Hafiz became more reconciled to the whim of his mistress : for, with the sanguine and joyous spirit of youth, he anticipated only a successful issue to each adventure, be it as wild as it might ; and the two thoughtless and happy lovers—happy in spite of all the dangers and

difficulties by which they were surrounded--laughed heartily, ere they parted, at the mere anticipation of the discomfort they were preparing for the Merchant.

Prudence, however, pointed at length to the displaced fragment of wall, which must, to insure the success of their schemes, be carefully re-adjusted ere the next visit of Suleiman; and as Hafiz prepared to depart, Helmas Hanoum unclasped from her slender wrist a costly bracelet well known to her husband, whose bridal gift it had been, and tendered it to her lover; "I need not tell you how to use it;" she said smilingly; "Zeïnip and I will not fail in our parts--the stone shall be sufficiently loosened, as soon as the Effendi departs, to enable you to remove it by a slight effort, and to restore the jewel ere he can turn the keys in his seven locks; and now, farewell."

Hafiz obeyed, and left the vault; the stone was rolled back into its place; the rubbish that he had flung into the apartment carefully swept away; and then the wary slave stretched across that portion of the wall the silken cord on which

hang the embroidered napkins used by Turkish females in their ablutions after each meal.

They had scarcely terminated their task, when the echoes of the subterranean betrayed the approach of the Shawl Merchant, who came to pay his daily visit ere he departed for the Tcharchi. He found his young wife languidly reclining on her cushions, and complaining of indisposition, which she attributed to the unwholesome atmosphere of her prison-chamber. Suleiman endeavoured to soothe her, but she only became more silent and sullen ; and he left her with a promise that she should not be much longer an occupant of this gloomy abode, since neither the luxuriousness of its arrangements, nor his own arguments, had power to win her to an approval of her position.

“ Mashallah ! what have I done ? ” she faltered, when she was once more left alone with her attendant ; “ should he indeed now yield to the prayer to which he has so long continued deaf, I shall have ruined my own cause, and broken the heart of Hafiz.”

“ Dry your tears, Effendim, and assist me to

remove the stone;" answered Zeinip calmly; " bir chey yok—there is nothing to fear—the Effendi only seeks to amuse you with words ; and, even were it otherwise, the son of Najip must use your jewel with less wit than I take him to possess, if he does not make your jealous jailor look closer than ever to the locks of his seven doors."

Satisfied of the truth of the remark, the pretty prisoner rose from her sofa to aid the efforts of her more far-seeing companion, and they readily rolled back the friendly stone sufficiently for their purpose ; and then, with beating hearts and attentive ears, awaited impatiently the termination of the first adventure of Hafiz with the Merchant.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SEVEN DOORS—*continued.*

SULEIMAN was squatted on his carpet, gravely knocking the ashes of an exhausted chibouque from the bowl of moulded red clay in which they had burnt away, and was preparing to renew the luxury, when the young and handsome son of Najip, the Adrianopolitan, who occupied the adjoining counter to that of the worthy husband of Helmas Hanoum, lounged slowly up to the station of his father, and conversed with him for a while on the merits of some merchandise which he had been displaying without success to a departed customer; or, rather, to one who he had hoped would have become such.

“ I have done nothing to-day, nothing;” said

Najib, in reply to the inquiry of his son ; “ save fold and unfold to no purpose. I must surely have been smitten by the Evil Eye, for the Kislar Agha, who purchased cachemires of me last year to the amount of two hundred and sixty thousand piastres, passed through the bazar this morning, without turning a glance towards me as I sat among my merchandise ; and when his pipe-bearer, who had good reason to remember the bargain, approached him with ‘ Effen-dim, this is Najib of Adrianople,’—he answered, hastily, ‘ What of that ? do I owe him gold that I am not free to pass on as I list ? ’ and in half an hour I saw him depart, followed by the nephew of Namik the one-eyed, almost staggering under the weight of his burthen. The Chibouquejhe gave me a look as he passed, which I translated easily into an avowal that Namik had not acted by him as generously as I had done, and that he was by no means satisfied with the change. But what do I say ? Am I a woman that I vent my disappointment in words ? Is not my beard white ? ”

"Wish me better fortune ;" said Hafiz ; "I have a jewel to sell." And he drew from beneath the folds of the shawl that girdled his waist a bag of gold-embroidered cachemire, whence he took a small parcel containing a bracelet. The ornament was a peculiar one ; it was a chain of fine gold, curiously worked, its links being wrought to resemble the minute scales of a serpent, and each at its point being tipped with a ruby ; while the head of the reptile was formed of one large emerald, into which two brilliant drops had been introduced to represent the eyes.

"Mashallah !" murmured Najib, fixing his gaze intently on the costly stone that clasped the jewel, with all the discriminating admiration bestowed in the East on gems of price ; "Mashallah ! 'tis a drop of light on a spring leaf ! 'tis a gaud for a Sultana !" And without a moment's delay he stretched the hand which held it towards his neighbour, saying earnestly ; "How think you, Effendim ? Is it not a noble gem ?"

Suleiman received the jewel calmly, but he

did not long look on it with a placid brow ; the blood rushed in a volume to his cheeks and forehead, the fire flashed from his eyes, he thrust back his turban, and gasped for breath ; “ You would sell this bauble, young man ;” he said, in the cold deep accent of concentrated passion ; “ and I, perchance, would become a purchaser ; but honest men do not pay away their gold for things like these without first learning somewhat of their history — I would fain know——”

“ What would you have me tell you ? ” asked Hafiz, with a smile which roused, as he believed that it must do, every suspicious pang of the jealous husband, who had at once recognised the jewel ; “ Should I say that it was given to me by a woman, were it not bosh—nothing ! You must see that it is a woman’s toy, and, as such, useless to me ; and you would hold me as a vain boaster—a sakal-siz, a no-beard.”

Again Suleiman gasped for breath. “ I will buy the jewel ; ” he said hoarsely ; “ yes, I will buy it ; leave it with me for to-night that I may ascertain its value, and to-morrow I will pay you the gold.”

“ That may not be, Effendim ; ” calmly replied Hafiz ; “ I will trust no one with the trinket until it ceases to be my property. Shall I heap dirt on my own head ? ”

“ But I have not wherewithal to purchase it until I return to mine own house — ” urged the merchant.

“ To-morrow then I will treat with you, should no one ease me of it meanwhile ; ” and Hafiz stretched forth his hand to resume possession of the bracelet. For a moment, however, Suleiman did not relax his hold, his fingers had instinctively closed over the treasure as he marked the action of the youth ; but suddenly a thought appeared to strike him, and he surrendered it up with a mien of as much indifference as he could assume.

“ Pek ahi, pek ahi — well, well, to-morrow be it then — to-morrow, or the next day, or at the opening of the coming week, as may best suit your leisure. Nay, how know I , ” and he forced a grim and ghastly smile, “ how know I that I may not have outworn my fancy when we next meet ? ”

"Even as you will ;" replied the youth, taking his place beside his father, and affecting to occupy himself with a mercantile calculation, while he was in fact narrowly watching every motion of his excited neighbour ; "I shall fold my feet upon the carpet of patience — what is written will come to pass!"

Suleiman filled a fresh pipe, and strove to be composed, but the effort was beyond his strength ; there was a nervous quivering of the eyelids and twitching of the upper lip, which betrayed the workings of his spirit. Turk though he was, there is a boundary beyond which even a Turk's apathy cannot hold out, and at length he reached it ; a cold dew stood on his forehead, a chill came over his heart, a thousand frightful phantasms danced across his brain, and he fairly gave up the struggle. After uttering a few hurried and almost inaudible directions to the lad who attended his commands, he rose slowly from his carpet, and, carefully putting aside his chibouque, he resumed his slippers, and offered his farewell greeting to Najib and his son. "I have business with the Algerine Hussein ;" he said, as

he slowly moved away ; “ the bazar is dull to-day, and I will profit by the opportunity.”

Hafiz returned his parting salutation with an air of preoccupation admirably acted ; and when Suleiman suddenly stopped at the distance of a hundred paces, and looked back, there still sat the son of Najib, the pen in his hand, the paper resting upon his knee, and his head bent down over his occupation. But there were eagle eyes under that ample turban which were otherwise employed than in decyphering the intricate characters of the scroll before them ; and no sooner had Suleiman turned into another branch of the Tcharchi, than Hafiz, springing from his seat, and oversetting in his haste a pile of bright patterned shawls, that in their fall made a rainbow-like confusion on the narrow path, rushed hastily round a neighbouring corner, and flew, as rapidly as his slippered feet would carry him, to the empty house adjoining that of the jealous husband. He had not been deluded by the subterfuge of his victim, and he knew that he had not a moment to lose. Accordingly he turned the key which he carried in his girdle,

without the delay of an instant, in the half-rusted lock, and drew the door after him, threw off his encumbering slippers in the passage, and, bounding down the steps that led to the vault three or four at once, had just time to fling the bracelet through the aperture in the wall, and to force back the stone, ere the approach of the Merchant became audible.

The young wife, on her side, was not idle ; she hastily clasped the jewel on her arm, and, folding herself closely in a shawl that enveloped her head and shoulders, laid herself along the sofa like one suffering from indisposition ; while Zeïnip, as expert in deception as her mistress, squatted on the floor, busied in the manufacture of lemon sherbet.

As the Merchant entered the vault, he raised the lamp that he carried above his head, and glared suspiciously around ; but all was calm, and still, and undisturbed ; so calm and so still indeed, that it smote upon the heart of Suleiman from its contrast to the heat and hurry of his own emotions ; “ Khosh geldin — you are welcome ;” whispered the negress, affecting to de-

precate the sound of the husband's approaching step ; " but tread softly, Effendim, for she has just fallen asleep."

" Sister of Sheitan ! " said the merchant in reply ; " what treason are you hatching here to fit your neck for the bowstring ? Do you take me for a divanè—an idiot ? "

The imperturbable Zeïnip only answered by raising her ebony hands in wonder, and rolling her eyes until nothing save the whites were visible.

" Tell me—" persisted Suleiman in the same subdued voice in which he had before spoken ; " tell me, mother of a dog, who has been here ? "

" Here ? " echoed the slave stupidly.

" Aye, here, in the boudroum — the subterranean ! a man—a young man—a devil ! "

" Holy Prophet ! has a devil been here ? " exclaimed the negress in her turn, with a look and accent of horror ; " and a young man too ? Did they come together ? "

This was too much—the patience of the Merchant could hold out no longer — it was too

palpable — his suspicions were but too well founded — he had been duped — he — Suleiman ! — he, who had even buried his wife in the bowels of the earth from the eyes of the whole world — he had been played upon — cheated by a couple of false plotting women, one of them a mere child ! He required only the evidence of his eyes to be fully, fatally, convinced of his misfortune — the sleeping beauty, whom his entrance had failed to rouse from her slumber, no longer wore the jewel which he had clasped upon her arm when he had welcomed her to his house — she would not venture to tell him that she had lost it ; for was not that subterranean her world ? — and thus she would be the instrument of her own destruction. For a moment the heart of the Merchant quailed — she was so young, so fair, so sad ; but he remembered the half exulting, half supercilious smile of the son of Najib when he spoke of the jewel, and he hastily approached the sofa, and flung back the shawl in which she was enveloped.

Still the young Hanoum slept, or appeared to sleep ; nor could the excited Merchant satisfy

himself of her treachery without awakening her, for her head was pillow'd upon the very arm that should have worn the bracelet. For another moment he paused ; and it was not surprising that he should do so, for a prettier picture than that beneath his eye it had never been his lot to look upon. Her arms, from which the long open sleeves had fallen back, were as white and smoothly-moulded as marble ; and the long dark hair that was scattered over her shoulders formed a strong contrast from the pure pale beauty of her complexion. A bright crimson spot was upon her cheek, deeper than mere sleep would have called up ; but she had already stilled the beating of her heart, and she breathed gently and calmly like one to whom slumber was indeed repose. The various tints of her gaudy costume shewed gaily in the light of the lamp ; and the little naked foot that peeped from beneath the ample tchalva, or pantaloons, of party-coloured chintz, gleamed out like a snow-flake.

“ Guzel—pek guzel — pretty, very pretty !” murmured the Merchant involuntarily ; but at

the instant the image of Hafiz, and his insulting triumph, once more rose up before him, and steeled his heart. “ Wake, Helnas ! ” he cried sternly ; “ wake, ‘tis your husband calls you.”

“ Mashallâh ! ” exclaimed the young wife opening her deep eyes, but without altering her position ; “ are you returned ? you had been here already to-day, and now you come only to awaken me from a dream in which I had quite forgotten you and your tyranny.”

“ And is this the fashion of your reception ? ” demanded the enraged Merchant ; “ but I will endure your woman-whims no longer. With your childish follies, your idle tears, I could have borne with patience — I have borne them — but you have become a dog, and the mother of dogs — you have eaten dirt — you have blackened your face, and defiled the grave of your father ! ”

“ Ne bilirim ? — what can I say ? What have I done ? ” asked the young Hanoum, who, secure as she knew herself to be in the possession of her bracelet, yet quailed beneath the deep stern passion of the Merchant ; “ How can I answer upbraiding that I am unable to comprehend ? Tell me at least — ”

“ Rather tell me”—burst forth Suleiman, goaded to madness by the placidity of the culprit ; “ rather tell me, sister of the Evil One, to whom have you given the jewel that I placed upon your arm when I was fool enough to take you to my home ? ”

“ Given it ! ” said his wife in well-counterfeited astonishment, as she calmly withdrew her arm from beneath her head, and extended it, encircled by the bracelet, towards her husband, while the negress, raising her spread palms in the air, groaned audibly as though she were mourning over the departed intellects of her master ; “ Ajaib—wonderful ! Given it ? ” she repeated, as if doubting that she had really comprehended the question. “ To whom could I give it, even were I disposed to part with the pretty bauble, save to my faithful Zeïnip, who has as little occasion as myself to wear gems where no one can see them ? ”

The Merchant could not believe his eyes ; but yes — there was the jewel — and that which Hafiz had offered for sale, clearly, therefore, could not have been his wife’s ; he took it from

her arm ; he examined it narrowly — had not the thing been impossible, he could have sworn — and yet, he should palpably have been a perjured man, for he had never parted from his seven keys — the locks had assuredly not been tampered with, and there was no other outlet from the vault. It was with a deep and almost hysterical respiration that Suleiman once more fastened on the ornament, fully persuaded that he must have been acting under some delusion of witchcraft, and keenly conscious of the full ridicule of his position. At that moment he would almost have rejoiced had his suspicions been confirmed, for then, at least, he would have been justified in his own eyes for the violence with which he had acted towards his young and innocent wife ; as it was, he felt that he must make a very sorry figure, and he could not immediately decide upon his best mode of action. Nor did the Hanoum and her handmaiden afford him much space for reflection ; they were conscious of their advantage, and resolved to avail themselves of it to the utmost, and the poor Shawl-merchant was consequently assailed with such a

tempest of reproach, vituperation, and tears, as had well nigh driven him mad, ere he was allowed once more to hear the sound of his own voice, and permitted to pour forth his regrets for an intemperance into which he had been betrayed by circumstances that he was alike unable to fathom or to explain.

Peace was, however, ultimately proclaimed, for the females, conscious that they were not altogether so blameless in the affair as they were now believed to be, and remembering that the purgatorial sufferings of the ill-fated merchant were only commencing, were graciously pleased to be pacified by slow degrees, and to accept the promises of their victim that he would never again offend by hinting that his wife was a family connexion of the Evil One, or polluting the grave of her unoffending parent. Enough of doubt, nevertheless, remained upon the mind of Suleiman, though he could not have shaped it into a tangible form, amid all this mystification, to induce him, ere he departed, to steal another long wary look round the vault ; and, after locking each of the seven doors, to hold his lamp

close to the key-hole, and to examine most narrowly the mechanism of the fastening, about which it must, however, be admitted that he knew nothing whatever ; but it is a satisfaction to investigate closely and carefully, and to form our own judgment, even of things on which we are profoundly ignorant ; and so the Merchant found it, as, after closing the last door, he retired to his own apartment, perfectly satisfied of the utter impossibility of any entrance into the prison-chamber, save by means of his own precious keys.

But one undertaking had been successfully accomplished, and Hafiz had now only to contend against six of the seven doors !

It needs not to be told that, on his next meeting with the Merchant, he replied to his inquiries by asserting that he had disposed of his jewel to another purchaser, nor that the answer added to the bewilderment of Suleiman. He knew not why, but he had assuredly never expected to see it again in the hands of the young man, nor to be urged a second time to make it his own property ; on the contrary, he had felt a most un-

pleasant presentiment that such would not be the case; and yet, when his expectations were realised, fresh doubts, and pangs, and wonderings assailed him. But be it as it might, what could he do more than he had already done? What locality could be more secure than that in which he had immured his wife. Ergo, he must forget the mysterious resemblance of the two bracelets, for it could of course be nothing more; and dismiss the subject from his mind altogether.

Now this was perhaps the wisest conclusion to which the worthy Merchant had ever come in his life, and it is probable that in time, had nothing occurred to renew the impression of the incident, his practice might have rivalled his theory; but his kismet—his fate—had ordained otherwise.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SEVEN DOORS—*continued.*

SULEIMAN had a friend who was Perfume-merchant to the Sultan. A man of mark was Saïdomer Nourren Atem, and well skilled in the composition of sweet and subtle scents. Every flower of the East had in turn given up its delicious breath in his crucibles and pipkins ; but there were certain secrets whose results were reserved for the exclusive use of the Imperial Harem. No slave in the tcharchi wore a gayer vest or a more elaborate turban than the Abyssinian confidant of Saïdomer Nourren Atem, or filled with a better grace the minute essence-boxes of ivory into which the more costly perfumes were compressed. No Musselmaun

smoked a more princely chibouque, or cinctured his brows with a more magnificent cachemire than Saïdomer Nourren Atem himself; he looked around him calmly on the rival establishments of the tcharchi, and defied competition.

Now it so chanced, that, about a week after the adventure of the bracelet, the skilful Scent-merchant made a discovery which, Turk though he was, well nigh turned him mad with delight. Never was so exquisite a perfume as that which, after a score or two of costly experiments, he succeeded in producing. The Attar-gul itself was fetid beside it! The Abyssinian slave who had assisted in the work flung himself along the floor in a paroxysm of extacy, and rolled his huge eyes, and clasped his ebony hands like a lunatic; while even the stately, and ordinarily imperturbable Saïdomer Nourren Atem himself apostrophised Allah and the Prophet as though he had succeeded in converting all the Christian raïahs of the Empire to Mohammedanism.

It was at this moment that Suleiman, a privileged person at all times, entered the spicy laboratory of the excited Scent-dealer; and, in the

first moment of exultation, nothing could be more simple than that Saidomer Nourren Atem should introduce to his friend the delicate composition which he was at that moment ready to believe would go far to immortalize him. The Orientals love perfumes beyond all other luxuries; and it is therefore not surprising that, as the exquisite aroma entered his nostrils, Suleiman the shawl merchant should stroke down his beard, draw a long breath, and stagger to the sofa, as though overwhelmed by its sweet-scent.

"Yallah! — in the name of the Prophet, whence comes it?" he murmured, when he could again command his voice; "He who distilled it must have been born of a rose, and nursed in the flower-garden of Paradise! I would give a cachemire of Lahore for a gilded flacon of that surpassing essence."

"What shall I say?" was the reply of the flattered Saidomer Nourren Atem; "I it was who caught the breath of the Houri, and imprisoned it in this liquid for the gratification of our Imperial master; and until the Sultan hath

quaffed it in his sherbet, how may I dispose of even the lightest drop to one of his slaves."

" And when he shall have inhaled its matchless sweetness ;" followed up Suleiman ; " if he does justice to its wise inventor, he will forbid that it should be purchased at will in the tcharchi, and thus——"

" You are right, my friend ;" said the Scent-merchant, " and you, at least, shall forestall the prohibition. Your felech hath guided you here in a happy moment—I will give you some of these drops of my soul — Bacarac ;" and the attentive slave bent forward to receive his instructions ; " give to the Effendi of this precious perfume as much as will fill the smallest box in the fourth drawer on the right hand. Have a care that the wool on which it is poured be of the finest and softest quality, and that the cover of the box fit to a nicety, for the essence is subtle, and I would not that he should perfume the tcharchi as he passes along."

The slave bent low, and prepared reverently to obey. The box indicated was most minute, curiously turned, and could be hermetically

closed ; the wool was with some difficulty introduced, and the precious liquid poured slowly, drop by drop, as though it had been blood wrung from the heart. Suleiman received it as it beseemed him to accept so costly a gift ; and while the delighted Saidomer Nourren Atem listened to his profuse and hyperbolical expressions of admiration, and gave directions for the security of the wondrous production of his genius, the Shawl-merchant was inwardly indulging a feeling of self-gratulation at the fortunate chance which would enable him to offer to his yet sullen wife a gift that must at once insure his favour.

It was consequently with a lighter step than usual that Suleiman bent his way homeward on the closing of the tcharchi, and, when his evening meal was ended, descended to the subterranean. Helmas Hanoum laid aside her zebec as he entered. It was no part of her system to allow him to think that she passed a single moment of the twenty-four hours in seeking to divert her thoughts from his tyranny and her own misfortune ; and she was only more cold,

and sullen, and ungracious, than her wont when he approached her. But what Eastern woman would not have been melted by such an offering as that of Suleiman ? A new and delicious perfume—to be forbidden, moreover, to all save the Imperial family ! How doubly charmed was the young wife of the Shawl-merchant when she had learnt the history of her treasure ! Was ever husband so assiduous to torment himself ? This was indeed a two-edged scimitar ! Nay, so glad and gay was her spirit, as she deposited the essence-box carefully amid the folds of the shawl that girdled her waist, that she yielded at once to a desire which he had often expressed, and she had as constantly refused to gratify, by resuming her instrument, and playing and singing until Suleiman fancied himself in the seventh heaven !

In a few hours the essence-box was in the possession of Hafiz.

It must surely have been through the agency of some imp of darkness that Najib the Adriopolitan and the husband of the pretty Helmas Hanoum chanced to be neighbours in the tchar-

ehi, for it gave to the plots of Hafiz all the effect of chance. Nothing could be more simple than that he should afford to his father the opportunity of sharing his enjoyments ; and accordingly there was no appearance of design in his hurried address, as he seated himself beside Najib, and drew forth his new treasure.

“ Mahomet be praised ! ” he said smilingly ; “ new stars and new flowers spring to life about us each day of our existence.”

“ Would that they were new customers ! it would be more profitable to the merchants of the city ;” replied Najib drily ; “ stars and flowers are pretty things enough, but they will neither turn to pillauf nor piastres.”

“ Of the stars it is true that nothing can be made ;” pursued the young man in the same joyous tone in which he had commenced the conversation ; “ but flowers boast not only brightness and beauty——”

“ Pshaw ! are you going to talk in verse, like your Persian namesake ? ” asked his father, whose temper had been somewhat ruffled by a morning of idleness.

“Would that I might, do I exclaim in my turn ;” said his son ; “but I am simply going to prove to you, better than by words, that flowers are not to be considered as mere toys. I will not talk of the sighs of roses, caught and changed into attar-gul, nor the sweet scents of jasmine, and a score of other blossoms, prisoned in minute flacons, and making summer wherever their breath is suffered to escape. I will rather confound you at once by an argument into which is crushed the combined perfume of a world of flowers — and here it is —” and he placed in the hand of his father the small ivory box that had been confided to him by the wife of the Shawl-merchant.

“There is but one Allah, and Mahomet is his prophet !” murmured Najib, slowly swinging himself backward, as he inhaled the odour of the new essence. “Ne bilirim—what can I say ? This it is to live in the country of the True Believers. They talk to us of Frangistan — is my face blackened, that I should believe that the dogs of Giaours have joys like these in their own lands, where they never see the sun ?

H—e—e—" and again he stroked down his beard as he drew in the sweet savour of the essence ; " what are the gums of Araby or the roses of Gurgistan beside this ?"

So well indeed did the worthy Adrianopolitan appreciate the enjoyment, that he did not appear likely to offer a portion of his pleasure to Suleiman, who sat enveloped in the scented fumes of his Salonica tobacco, apparently quite unmoved by the raptures of his neighbour. Suddenly, however, Najib remembered that a gratification, of whatever description, is greatly enhanced by participation and sympathy ; and upon this principle he bent towards the rival Shawl-merchant, and proffered to him the little box.

" Tchabouk, tchabouk—quick, quick ! close it carefully as you restore it ;" cautioned Hafiz, with an air of extreme anxiety : " I would not, for all the riches on the shelves of Saidomer Nourren Atem, the Sultan's scent-dealer, that a breath of this precious compound should escape."

But the petrified shawl-merchant heeded him not ; he sat gazing from Hafiz to the ivory

box, and from the ivory box back again to Hafiz, like one who is not quite certain that he does not dream. He unscrewed the lid, he bent down his head, and hurriedly inhaled the precious perfume, and again he fixed his large, dark, flashing eyes on the son of Najib.

“ Is it not a breathing of Paradise ?” asked the young man, with a self-gratulatory smile.

“ And you obtained it, where ? ” gasped out Suleiman.

“ Yok, yok — no, no — I am not bound to name the houri who paid me so richly for a light flattery ; ” was the reply ; “ but this much I may confess, that where I won the bracelet, there also I gained the essence.”

Suleiman ground his teeth, but he did not articulate a syllable.

“ Beware, Hafiz ; ” said his father, deprecatingly ; “ where the rose grows, there does the thorn flourish ; and the jewelled hilt ever betokens the keen weapon.”

“ But what if I secure the gems, and defy the blade ? ” asked the young man.

“ It is ill making your horse’s bridle out of a

bowstring ;” followed up the anxious parent ; “ let this gift be the last.”

Hafiz only smiled again, and, as he did so, his eyes met those of the agitated Suleiman ; “ What shall I give you for this toy ?” he demanded hurriedly.

“ Ne bilirim — what can I say ? Not all the silks in the tcharchi of Broussa should buy it of me ; shall I fill my own mouth with ashes ?” and, as he spoke, the youth extended his hand to regain possession of the treasure.

“ Only let me shew it to Saïdomer Nourren Atem ;” urged Suleiman ; “ I know not its name, and I would fain become the possessor——”

“ Hay, hay ! — so, so ! Think you that I will suffer it to be hawked through the bazar like some villain merchandise ?” asked Hafiz angrily ; “ Mashallâh, I am not so base.”

The discomfited Suleiman only sighed, and relinquished the fairy box to its owner : this time there could be no mistake — there was not its fellow in Stamboul — he had been too slow in detecting the first artifice of his plotting helpmate ; but now — now — he should confront her on

the instant, ere she had time or opportunity to dupe him twice—he was bewildered, mystified—there must be witchcraft in it ; but, strong in his sense of wrong, he would defy the Evil One himself to-day to cheat him with a lie ! And with this laudable conviction he shuffled off his carpet, thrust his feet into his slippers, and, without the courtesy of a parting word to his companions, hurriedly proceeded towards his dwelling.

But, alas for the worthy Merchant ! the very precaution which should have secured his safety, proved his bane, for he was so long engaged in unlocking his seven doors, that the ivory box arrived in the prison-chamber before him ; and, as he turned the last key to the accompaniment of the high clear voice of his wife, who was warbling out a love-ballad, he had the gratification of finding her engaged at a game of ball with the box itself, which she was dropping from one hand to the other in regular time with the strain ; her delicate little fingers closing and unclosing over it, and her fair round arms gleaming out in the lamp-light like water-lilies.

Suleiman was petrified ! He rubbed his eyes, and pinched himself to ascertain whether he really was awake — he darted forward, and seized the toy from the hands of his pretty captive, for which he was rewarded with a frown and a pout—he examined it narrowly, and there it was—the very same—a small rose in the centre of the lid, three rings round the outside, and a flaw in the ivory about the size of a pin's head ! He had seen all this in the tcharchi—he had almost walked himself into a fever to prove that he had been played upon and cheated, and---here was the box !

In the agony of his amazement he seated himself beside the young Hanoum, and, as soon as he had recovered his breath, he told her all. When the tale was ended, the happy husband was glad that he had done so, for never were two women more overwhelmed with wonder. His wife cast up her bright eyes, and crept closer to him as she murmured something about demons and magic ; and Zeïnip whispered that the victim of this dark sorcery would do well to summon a dervish of the sect of the Mevlavies,

and be exorcised. Suleiman listened to the counselling of his trembling prisoners, and promised to think seriously of their advice. Never since their incarceration in the vault had they been so gentle and so courteous; and, although a pang and a doubt would now and then cross the mind of the Merchant as he lent a willing ear to their surmises, and suffered himself to be soothed by their suggestions, he soon banished all mistrust; for was it not worse than folly to believe that a jewelled bracelet and a box of essence could escape through stone walls? and, more absurd still, be in two places at once?

And yet — but what availed it to dwell upon the subject? There were the locks, the walls, and the doors; and, consequently, however strange, and unaccountable, and bewildering such coincidences undoubtedly were, they could be only coincidences after all. Suleiman was a wise man in his own way, a man of fore-thought and precaution, with an energy of self-confidence which always made him wind up his reflections with the comfortable and self-gratulatory mental apostrophe of— “ It cannot be

otherwise ; I am not the person to be taken in — I have lived too long to be duped by fools : ” and this was the murmured accompaniment to the echo of his footsteps as he slowly ascended from the vault on the present occasion ; and scarcely could he have extinguished his lamp on arriving at the head of the stair, ere the stone was rolled away that gave ingress to the prison-chamber of the pretty Hanoum, and a chorus of laughter, where a deep bass blended with an harmonious tenor, rang through the subterranean.

The joy of Hafiz was great — he had opened a second lock — he had flung back two of the seven doors !

CHAPTER XV.

THE SEVEN DOORS — *continued.*

SULEIMAN denied no enjoyment save that of light and liberty to his young wife. Those well-beloved luxuries of Turkish women, shawls and diamonds, he lavished on her with as much profusion as though she possessed the opportunity of exhibiting them to the admiration and envy of her acquaintance : and it was but a few days after the adventure of the essence-box that he carried with him, on his visit to the vault, a cachemire of a new and rare description, the first which had been seen in the tcharchi of Constantinople.

All shawls of price in the East being woven in pairs, Suleiman, as he made the purchase

of a stranger with whom he had never before traded, inquired eagerly for its fellow, when he was informed that, the pecuniary means of the Merchant having become impaired by a long and unsuccessful speculation, he had been permitted, through the courtesy of a friend, to possess himself of one of these costly pieces of merchandise, although he was unable to pay down the sum necessary to make him the owner of both ; and that, in consequence of this arrangement, none could be found in the city of the same pattern and texture.

Groups of minute and finely-wrought flowers were scattered over a ground of faint yellow, and a few threads of green were woven into a border of crimson, of so rich a dye that it looked as though the wool had been stained with the juice of the pomegranate blossom. The Merchant added his private mark to those which were already impressed on the paper ticket, regarded in the East as an additional ornament, and always conspicuously displayed in token of the freshness of the shawl, ere he unfolded it.

before the admiring eyes of his wife and her attendant.

The pretty Hanoum smiled her thanks for the costly gift, and in five minutes it was gracefully folded about her waist ; the rich crimson border in strong relief on the sky-blue tchalva, and the pale yellow centre rendered still more delicate in tint as it contrasted with the deep purple vest.

The interior of the vault would have been at that moment a study for the orientalised pencil of Pickersgill ; the languid beauty of the young wife, who sat upon her cushions on the ground, beside the sofa honoured by the occupation of the Merchant, in his flowing robes of ruby-coloured cloth, ample turban, and amber-lipped chibouque, was softened into deeper loveliness by the faint light of the distant tapers, grouped together on a small stand at the extremity of the apartment ; while, immediately in their broadest glare, squatted the negress in an antery * of white cotton, with her long hair falling over her shoulders in a score of minute braids, and her large eyes fixed earnestly upon her mistress. The sofa glittered with gold fringe, and the cushions

* Outer dress.

were gay with embroidered flowers; all the showy toys of a Turkish harem were lavishly strown in every direction; and, as the large deep eyes of the Hanoum wandered over the chamber, a smile rose to her lip, which, by whatever feeling it might have been summoned there, added to the brightness of her pure and pallid beauty. No wonder that the Merchant, as he gazed upon her childlike loveliness, congratulated himself upon his sagacity and caution; no wonder that as he looked upon her languid grace, and the dove-like dreaminess that dwelt in her dark eyes, he felt at once the folly of his passing doubts. She had not energy to plot against his peace!

It was with a somewhat coxcombical swing in his gait that Hafiz, a day or two subsequently to that of which I have just spoken, approached the husband of Helmas Hanoum as he sat in his usual place in the tcharchi; and, after saluting him with infinite politeness, begged him to take the trouble of examining the cachemire that formed his turban, as he had been desired to purchase a similar one for a friend who was about to depart for Smyrna, and who was ready to

pay down the price which might be agreed upon between them.

"I would have sought it among the bales of my father ;" pursued the young man, as he unfolded it from his brow before the fascinated eyes of the astonished Merchant ; "but I should only have wasted time, for well know I that he hath not such a cachemire, though it might be paid for by all the piastres in the Imperial treasury. 'No,' said I, as I passed the threshold of my home ; 'I will away at once to Suleiman Effendi, he only can be the owner of such a shawl as mine, for has he not the newest and the richest goods in the tcharchi ?' Have I said well, Ef-fendim ? Can you pair me my cachemire ?"

But the merchant answered not ; his gaze was riveted — not by the fine and delicate texture of the costly shawl — not by the deep rich tints of its gorgeous border — but on the little ticket where he recognised his own private mark !

Suleiman was right when he resolved this time, whatever might be the consequence, not to restore the shawl to Hafiz until he had assured himself beyond all possibility of deception, that

it was not his own property. Yes — let the consequence be what it might ! he armed himself resolutely against reproaches, threats, and violence, for he was prepared for all these ; and, gradually recovering his self-possession as he formed this doughty resolution, he affected for a time to be carefully examining the quality of the cachemire, in order to collect his ideas, and to determine on his mode of action. A few moments sufficed for this ; and keeping, without apparent design, his hold of the prize, he raised his eyes to those of the young man, and, slowly removing the chibouque from his lips, said quietly.

“ Is the Effendi, your friend, prepared to pay down a heavy sum for the goods ? ”

“ Have it — yes ; ” answered the youth calmly.

“ Then to-morrow I may perchance be ready to deliver it up ; ” and again Suleiman examined the ticket ; “ Ey vah ! 'tis not often that I have seen so costly a shawl. Did you purchase it in the tcharchi ? ”

“ Purchase it ! ” echoed Hafiz, with another of those mocking smiles which had already mad-

dened the Merchant on a former occasion ; “ where was the son of Najib to find piastres enough to buy such a cachemire as that ? Mash-allah ! I should be long in counting them.”

“ But it is your property, since you have just untwisted it from your brow ?”

“ Alhemdullilah ! praise be to Allah ! You have said well, Effendim ; it is mine—but that is not my errand ; to-morrow then you will pair it, and tell me your price ?” And, as he spoke, he took hold of the shawl, and would have drawn it from under the hand of the Merchant, but Suleiman’s fingers closed over it with a firm grasp, as he prepared himself to contend with the indignation and anger of its declared owner.

“ Yavash, yavash — softly, softly, Effendim ;” he said, in a grave and stately tone ; “ this is not a question of matching a porcelain cup, nor a clay chibouque-bowl ; many things are to be considered and ascertained. Learned as I am in the lore, I cannot carry away with me the exact texture of the cachemire, the quality of the wool, nor even the intricacies of the pattern, and the shades of the dyes — you must leave the shawl

with me, in order that I may compare it with that to which I have already likened it in my mind ; and to-morrow I will bring you the two together."

Hafiz laughed a light laugh. " You jest with me, Effendim ;" he said tauntingly ; " I know you to be a rich man, and I believe you to be an honest one, but I will not therefore part from my property as though I cared not——"

" I will deposit its value with you in gold ;" interposed Suleiman ; " and when I return the shawl, you can restore the piastres — otour-sit."

" Be it so ;" said the young man calmly ; and, throwing off his slippers, he seated himself beside the merchant ; and, having lighted his chibouque, smoked on in silence, while the more than ever bewildered Suleiman counted out the deposit money on the carpet between them.

" Pek ahi—it is well—" were the next words he uttered, as the golden and glittering pile of coin was transferred to his purse ; " Fail not, I pray you, at this hour to-morrow with the fellow shawl, and I have no fear that we shall cavil for

the price." Then, shaking the ashes from his pipe, he put up the money, resumed his slippers, and walked away, leaving Suleiman in possession of the cachemire.

Long sat the merchant gazing at the rainbow-like subject of his new mystification. He was more perplexed than ever. He could vow upon the Korân that this was his own shawl — the present that he had made to his wife — the costly piece of merchandise to which he had proudly affixed his private mark — and there *was* the mark — there was no mistaking his misfortune — the father of evil was assuredly mixed up with the transaction, for the shawl must have been conveyed to Hafiz, either through the bowels of the earth, or on the bosom of the air : be that as it might, and he could not attempt the solution of the problem, he now held the shawl ; and he resolved not to relax his grasp for a moment, until he confronted his wife with her perfidy, and forced from her a confession of the truth.

Acting upon this determination, Suleiman carefully folded the cachemire, and lodged it

safely beneath his ample robe ; and, having seen his merchandise duly secured by his attendant, bent his steps homeward, with visions of bowstrings, sacks, and overwhelming waters, chasing each other, like the spectre-hounds of the Arabian fiction, across his over-heated brain. It is a singular fact, and one which it would be difficult to explain, but it is nevertheless true, that, as he moved slowly through the crowded streets, and exchanged salutations with his acquaintance, he could not decide whether he wished to prove his wife unworthy of the extraordinary indulgence with which he had treated her, or not. It was vexatious, certainly, to lose the idea of being, if not quite loved, at least reverenced and feared, and, above all, obeyed — while, on the other hand, it was provoking to be duped, and mystified, and pursued by constantly-recurring doubts. This day must, however, decide all ; and he magnanimously resolved to proportion the punishment of his wife to her apparent contrition, and to his own conviction of her repentance and probable amendment.

Kindly thoughts and relenting feelings were

creeping over him as he descended the stair to the vault. Helmas Hanoum was so young, so pretty, and so graceful, it would be ten thousand pities to drown or to exile her; and he had arrived at a firm determination to push his forbearance to the extremest limit, when, on arriving at the fifth door, his ear caught the distant echo of a female voice, and he became conscious that his intriguing and false-hearted helpmate was actually at that very moment—that awful moment, freighted as it was with the chances of life or death—when he held in his hand the scales of severe and rigid justice, which his single breath would suffice to turn against her—actually singing to her zebec, as though neither doubt nor danger existed in the world!

This was too much even for a Turk's philosophy, and he accordingly flung back the two remaining doors with a more rapid hand; and his brow was crimson as he stood before the pretty culprit, prepared to overwhelm her with cutting reproaches, and indisputable proofs of her unequalled guilt. But, ere the first sentence

had passed his lips, his words were arrested in the utterance ; for, as the young Hanoum, according to custom, laid aside her instrument on his entrance, he at once discovered that her waist was girdled with *the shawl* — the shawl that was even yet hidden beneath the folds of his robe — the shawl whose counterpart had never been seen in Stamboul !

The Merchant gasped for breath, and the lamp fell from his hand upon the snowy Indian matting that covered the floor, amid the laughter of his wife, and the reproachful ejaculations of her more thrifty attendant ; but he heeded neither the one nor the other as he rushed forward, and, seizing a corner of the cachemire, looked eagerly for his own private mark upon the ticket. His search proved successful : there it was — and his next action was to tear the shawl which he bore about him from its hiding-place ; a second sufficed to draw it forth ; and who shall describe the astonishment of Suleiman when he found himself unable to distinguish between the two — they were alike to a thread — to a shade — and to crown all — his mark — his

own private and peculiar mark — was upon each.

“ What means this ? ” asked the young beauty, as she possessed herself of the newly-arrived cachemire ; “ Did you not tell me that Stamboul held not the fellow-shawl to mine ? And are not these two as like as twin roses ? Chok chay—that is much—do I speak clearly ? ”

“ You say truly — you say truly ; ” gasped the Merchant : “ they are alike, quite alike ; woven in the same loom — dyed in the same copper — marked by the same — but no, no ; if I really live, and do not dream, they cannot have been marked by the same hand. It is an invention of Satan—a plot hatched by the Evil One.”

“ Sen ektiar der — you are the master ; but what new mystification is this ? ” demanded Helmas Hanoum pettishly ; “ Is it not enough that you should vaunt your own generosity in giving me a shawl of which even the Sultan himself (may his shadow never be less !) might be proud, and which he could not purchase in Stamboul—but you must come to place another precisely similar under my very eyes, to prove

that you had made me an easy dupe? Unhappy woman that I am, to be first buried alive, and then treated like a wayward child by my own husband!"

"Peace—peace,"—exclaimed the Merchant, impatiently: "Woman! you do not know—you cannot guess"—

"I do not wish to know, and I will not guess!" broke in his wife in a higher key: "Affet ollah — much good may it do you—you are a divanè — an idiot — you do not speak Turkish — your words are dark, and your face is blackened — Who am I that you should have made me your wife?"

Suleiman only sighed; he was too wise to answer the revilings of a woman; and he folded up the mysterious shawl with a steady eye, though his heart beat more tumultuously than usual. He stayed not to apologize for his abruptness, nor to explain his perplexity; but, taking his lamp from the hand of Zeinip, who had busied herself in retrimming it after its fall, he walked silently out of the subterranean.

Long and loud was the laughter that followed

closely on his departure, and the last key was not turned in its lock ere Hafiz was seated at the feet of his mistress, detailing to her the scene of the morning.

“ I would have given a thousand piastres to have seen him when you so readily consented to leave the cachemire in his hands,” said the Hanoum gaily: “ and to watch him as he counted out his darling gold, and placed it before you! But, now tell me, Hafiz, how your friend became possessed of this rare shawl, and left you only the task of counterfeiting Suleiman’s mark upon the ticket.”

“ ’Tis a simple tale, my Sultana:” replied the youth, as he looked into her laughing eyes; “ and requires no khoja—no scribe, to record it. My friend Noureddin fell from his camel as he was journeying to Stamboul, and was grievously bruised: when a certain merchant, who travelled in his company, tended him like a brother, and bore with him through all his hours of suffering. Noureddin was not one to forget such kindness: he reads the Korân daily, and gives freely to the poor; how much more readily then did he open

his hand to the friend of his sickness ! He only hesitated as to the means of serving him, when, as if guided by the Prophet, the Merchant himself suggested the method, by thus addressing him as they rode side by side together through the gate of Scutari :—‘ Effendim,’ said the merchant, ‘ you are a wealthy man, and a pious one : you are ever ready to help the needy, and to uphold the weak—I pray you do me a grace—I know that your bales are precious ; and I have heard that among your merchandise are shawls of so fine a fabric, that they seem to have been woven by the Houri. Sell me, I pray you, one of these at an easy price, that I may on my arrival in Stamboul dispose of it in the tcharchi, at a rate that may help to defray the cost of my voyage ; for my affairs have not prospered, and I am loth to return to the house of my father, and render up so poor an account of my venture.’—‘ Be it so,’ answered Noureddin cheerfully ; and, when they reached the khan where he had resolved to house his goods, he opened a bale of shawls, containing among others that which you now wear, and the one that I borrowed and carried to your husband.

“ The Merchant was struck with the splendour of the cachemires, but even although Noureddin offered them to him at the price that they had cost in the loom, he yet wanted gold to make up the sum ; and it was at last arranged that he should become the possessor of one of these only, taking with the remainder of his piastres another of inferior value. On arriving in Stamboul he disposed of it, doubtlessly with great advantage, to Suleiman ; while I chanced to remark its fellow when examining the merchandise with which Noureddin proposed to trade at Sevastopol, whither he was bound when he had arranged his affairs in this country. The rest of the tale is not worth telling ; and you are bound from this instant to confess that I have opened three of the seven doors !”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SEVEN DOORS—*continued*.

ABOUT a week elapsed after the adventure of the shawls, when, as Suleiman was one morning sitting in the salemliek,* or man's wing of the house, smoking his last pipe previously to repairing to the tcharchi, a slave informed him that a negress, who refused to tell her errand, craved to see him for a few moments. The Merchant “ pished,” and “ pshawed,” and contracted his brows with impatient annoyance, for he had quite enough to do to arrange his own affairs, without interfering in those of others ; but he nevertheless consented, after a moment's delay, to receive the applicant, be she whom she might ; and accordingly, leaving her slippers at

* Literally, “ where the man is honoured.”

the extremity of the passage, the stranger approached with a succession of lowly prostrations, as far as the door of Suleiman's apartment.

Every one knows that the yashmac worn by the Turkish women in the streets conceals the whole of the face save the eyes, and that the ample feridjhe of cloth envelops the form so closely as to disguise the whole of its outline ; but those who have resided in the East for any length of time are quite aware that it is possible, despite all these precautions, to give something more than a guess at the identity of the wearer : and thus, as the negress stood before him, the Merchant started, for he thought he traced a singular likeness in the stranger to the slave who shared the prison-harem of his wife.

"There is but one Allah !" commenced the intruder, as soon as she found herself alone with the Merchant ; "Do I stand before Suleiman, the son of Gunduz Hanoum ?"

"You stand before him ;" answered the host.

"I have a message for Suleiman Effendi ;" pursued the slave ; "and ekhi kateti—there is some-

thing in it ; a message from a young and anxious beauty, who craves of him a grace, which, if he be the beyzadeh that men deem him, he will not refuse."

" What you say is idle :" interposed the Merchant ; " bosh der—it is nothing ; I am a grave man, and my beard is white."

" May it never be plucked out !" said the negress solemnly. " What shall I reply to my mistress ?—Shall I——"

" Who is the Hanoum Effendi, and who are you yourself ?" demanded the irritated Suleiman, whose suspicions were strengthened by the voice of his strange visiter, even muffled as it was beneath her yaahmac. " I shall give no pledge until I know with whom I have affair. Mashallah ! I am too old to be cheated by a woman."

" May my face be blackened :" urged the slave earnestly, using in her energy an ejaculatory sentence which savoured strongly of supererogation : " may my face be blackened if I seek to deceive so pious and worthy a Musselman—Kiefiniz ayi me—is your humour good ? Effendim, I was told not to betray to you the

name of the young beauty, nor even to mention my own ; but who shall disobey your bidding ? Inshallah ! I am not so bold, when my foot is on your floor, and my slippers are at your threshold."

" Speak then ;" said the Merchant, " I listen."

" Hassan is a man of substance :" commenced the negress ; " he has goods in the tcharchi, and gold in the salemliek ; a caïque on the Bosphorus, and an araba in the city streets. If affection could have been bought like unwrought silk, and fashioned into form like beaten silver, the wife of Hassan might have loved him ; but love, Effendim is like the wind : it comes and goes as it lists, and no man can buy it with treasure, nor fetter it with bonds — nay, had Hassan buried his young wife in the bowels of the earth, and robbed her of the glorious daylight which Allah gave alike to all, *he* must know little of the sex who is not quite aware that she would have cheated him at last. But why do I say this to you, Effendim ? to you, who need no words of mine to convince you of the

fact? Am I a divanè — an idiot — that I talk thus to Suleiman the son of Gunduz Hanoum, who knows all things? Ne apalum—what can I do?"

Something between a sigh and a groan escaped from the Merchant, but he did not utter a syllable.

"Let not the Effendi imagine, however," resumed the negress, "that Hassan *did* so bury his fair young wife—Shekiur Allah! he was too good a Musselmaun thus to provoke the wrath of the Prophet; no, no, he knew better. Are there not laws in Stamboul? Is there not a strong cord, and a swift current, if a man really wishes to sell himself to Sheitan, and to defile his own grave? Why then should he act like a madman, and be laughed at to his beard?"

"All this is then bosh — nothing :" said the Merchant angrily; "why do you tire my ears, and devour my time with empty tales; say your errand, and leave me to my thoughts."

"You are a wise man, Effendim; and I am but a woman," was the reply; "Allah bilir — God alone knows; as for me, I was only endeavouring to explain——"

"A wise head spareth its tongue;" said the host sententiously; "few words make wisdom—you waste time."

The slave folded her arms before her, and bowed her head meekly on her bosom as she continued; "Hassan brought a wife into his harem, but she never gave him her heart. How could she? Hassan suspected that she loved another. He was a wise man in this at least, for she did. Why did the Prophet plant roses in the gardens of Paradise, save that they should be gathered?"

"And who is this Hassan of whom you speak?" again demanded the Merchant, as he suffered the smoke from his chibouque to escape, and roll away in dense curls over his mustache: "who is this Hassan who mated himself so ill?"

"He sits on the fourth carpet in the Bezenstein;" said the slave, "and he is kinsman to the Cadi."

"And his wife?—"

"Was the daughter of Hakif the sekeljhe,*

* Confectioner.

near the Atmeidan ; Gul-süy* Hanoum, the prettiest girl in that quarter of the city.”

“ And what would she ask of me ? ” inquired the Merchant, somewhat mollified by the elaborate candour of his companion.

“ The churl her husband has refused to give her a new cachemire for the feast of the Baïram, because, forsooth, he suspects her of——”

“ Yok, yok—no, no ! I will assist no plotting wife to deceive her husband ! ” broke forth Suleiman in a transport of virtuous indignation. “ Get you gone—there are easy dupes in the tcharchi who, having been fooled themselves, will be glad to aid in the good work of hoodwinking others : but I am not of these, woman ! I am not of these. Return to your light mistress, and tell her——”

“ Yavash, yavash—not so fast, Effendim, not so fast ; ” interposed the pertinacious slave ; “ I have as yet told but half my tale. In the shawl-bazār sits a worthy merchant named Najib, an Adrianopolitan by birth, who has a son called——”

* Rosewater.

"Hafiz,"—exclaimed her listener, aroused at once into attention.

"You have said well, Effendim; he is indeed named Hafiz, and it would seem that you know him. If it be the same of whom I speak, he is a tall youth, with large dark eyes, and a smile like daybreak——"

The Merchant made a gesture of impatience, and knocked the ashes from a pipe which was but newly replenished—"And what of this young man?" he asked peevishly.

"He has seen the Hanoum Effendi, and loves her:" was the quiet reply; "He has learnt that she desires a new cachemire, and he has offered to procure for her the richest shawl in the city if she will buy it with a smile."

"Kiupek—dog! and the son of dogs! his beard is not yet grown;" muttered Suleiman beneath his breath; but the quick ear of the negress caught the words, and she answered readily, "Even so said my mistress;—‘Semsi,’* whispered she as he spoke; ‘am I a child to be won by a stripling—shall I sell myself to a boy,

* Parasol.

when I have only to ask the love of a man, and win it.””

“ She said well,” murmured Suleiman, sententiously; “ the wife of Hassan is a wise woman, and deserves to eat her pilauf in peace. Bashustun ! on my head be it !””

“ She has set her heart on a new cache-mire,” pursued the slave, heedless of the interruption; “ but she has no gold, and Hafiz has resolved to tempt her to-morrow with the choicest in the tcharchi : she must have a shawl, or she will fall sick, and, should she fall sick, she will lose her beauty, and then the brightest carnation in Stamboul will be withered for lack of a few hundred piastres ; unless, indeed, the Effendi before whom I stand will consent to receive in exchange some jewels, for which her fancy is outworn, and which will sell well in the bezenstein.””

“ And why not ?” asked Suleiman, who had forgotten his suspicions in the joy that he felt from the hope of outwitting Hafiz ; “ Show me the diamonds, and I will tell you at once if I can venture on the traffic.””

“ Astaferallah — Heaven forbid ! Does the Effendi imagine that the young Hanoum would intrust me with the jewels before she learnt his determination ! Or that she will not desire to select her own cachemire ? No, no,—if the Effendi consents to effect the exchange, he will have an opportunity of making his own bargain with the fair wife of Hassan, who has already looked upon him from behind her lattices, and selected him from among all the merchants in the tcharchi, because she saw him with pleasure. Shall it be so, Effendim ?”

The fluttered and flattered Suleiman did not immediately reply — a thousand suspicions of foul play rose up before him ; and, as his long gaze fastened on the negress, and his ear drank in her accents, he could not divest himself of the belief that it was really Zeinip who stood before him, or Sheitan himself in her likeness ; but then again all was uncertainty, and Hafiz — what would he not give to circumvent the plottings of his arch-enemy ? for as such he could not forbear considering him — “ Do you take me for a fool — a madman ? ” he asked quietly ; “ that I

should set my foot in the harem of Hassan the jeweller, and bring my neck to the bowstring ? Am I a boy, like the son of Najip, that I should do this thing ? ”

“ And is the daughter of Hakif an idiot, that she should share her pillauf with dogs, and blacken her own face ? ” asked the negress in her turn ; “ Are there no harems in Stamboul save that of Hassan her husband ? Allah buyûk der — Allah is great — the Effendi is as a man who dreams.”

The Merchant started. He had never committed the folly of compromising his personal safety, even in his youth ; and that he should now voluntarily encounter an almost certain peril for the mere gratification of thwarting a vain and froward boy, was an excess of rashness and indiscretion from which he shrank with very natural repugnance. “ I will answer you to-morrow on this point ; ” he said, at last ; “ let me see you before the noon-tide prayer in the bazar, and I will tell you my decision.”

“ Ere that hour the shawl of Hafiz will be in the harem of Hassan’s wife ; but be it as you

will—" and, as the slave spoke, she pressed her fingers to her lips and brow, and moved to depart.

" Listen to me"—exclaimed the Merchant sternly, as he rose suddenly from the sofa, and laid his hand upon her arm; " I am no longer to be cheated like a child — you are Zeinip, the slave of Helmas Hanoum my wife — how you came here I know not, but it must have been by the agency of some devilish magic — I have watched you narrowly — Deny it not — you are the plotting sister of Sheitan to whom I owe the miseries of months, and hence you depart not until I have visited the vault. Should my suspicions be correct, make your peace with Allah while you may, for you have not long to live—" and, as he spoke, he pointed with his outstretched finger to the window, through which might be seen, in the distance, the bright ripple of the Bosphorus dancing in the sunlight; " but if I have deluded myself, I shall not detain you long; and I swear to you, by the beard of the Prophet, to follow you whithersoever you list."

" And why should I wish it otherwise? "

asked the negress, shaking off his grasp ; “ Am I not your slave ? and are there not still many hours to sunset ? I have told you that my name is Semsi, and that I serve Gul-süy Hanoum, the wife of Hassan the jeweller.”

“ And I have told you, in my turn,” retorted the Merchant ; “ that I am no longer to be fooled. What I have said is said.”

“ It is said ;” echoed the visiter, as she calmly squatted down upon a cushion which chanced to be near her, with an unmoved gesture of at-homeness, that more than ever convinced the angry Soleiman of her identity. “ But the Effendi will do well to return quickly, as my mistress may require my services ; meanwhile, I will tell my tusbee, and wish good speed to his errand.”

The Merchant did not vouchsafe a reply, but contented himself with desiring two of his servants, who were lounging in the lower hall of the house, not to suffer the negress to escape ; and, after this very natural precaution, he lighted a lamp, and proceeded as fast as his agitation would permit to the prison of his wife.

As the last door flew back, the irritated husband became instantly aware, even through the unusual gloom of the subterranean, that it was tenanted as usual by two individuals. On the sofa sat Helmas Hanoum with a circular mirror in her hand, staining her eyebrows with the juices of a nut which she had been burning on the candle that stood on a small table beside her ; and immediately beneath the lamp, at the other extremity of the vault, expiring at the very moment of his entrance, as it appeared from lack of oil, was spread the prayer-carpet of the slave, who, with the long white cloth twined about her head and face, without which the Musselmaun women never repeat their orisons, was devoutly engaged in her namaz.* The Merchant actually trembled with rage and mystification --- there she was ! — at intervals pressing her ebony-coloured hands upon her knees ; and her naked feet showing like two lumps of charcoal on the crimson ground of the carpet ; piously indifferent to his entrance ; and wholly unconscious of

•

* Devotions.

the absurd error into which she had been the innocent means of betraying him. So earnest was her devotion, moreover, that, as she bent down in the pauses of the prayer, sundry low groans escaped her, which, had she been otherwise engaged, would have appeared rather to be hysterical efforts to subdue a movement of mirth, than conscience-stricken demonstrations of holy suffering; as it was, however, the worthy Merchant saw at once that he had committed a new folly; and, even while he sustained a disjointed and unsatisfactory conversation with his wife, his thoughts were with the captive negress in the saleniek; who, on her return to the harem of the daughter of Hakif, would not fail to make merry at the expense of the jealous husband. He was also conscious of having betrayed a secret not altogether calculated to decrease the ridicule; and thus he deemed it expedient to make a hasty retreat from the prison-chamber, in order to liberate his new captive, whom each added moment of restraint could not fail to exasperate into a resolution of more determined revenge. He accordingly informed Helmas

Hanoum, whose eyebrows had by this time been taught to form a curved line all across her forehead, that he had pressing business at the tchar-chi ; and, after bidding her console herself in her captivity with her zebec, and leaving beside her a small basket containing a pillauf made of quails, he resumed his lamp, turned another last, unloving look on the devout negress, and was soon on his way through the vaulted passage to the salemliek.

The key had turned in the third door which parted him from his prisoners, when the kneeling figure sprang lightly into an upright attitude ; and, flinging aside the prayer-cloth that had bound its head, stood before the laughing Helmas Hanoum, at least a foot too tall for the negress Zeinip. The shaven skull, with its one long lock of silky black hair, was soon concealed beneath an ample turban ; the dye washed from the face, hands, and feet of the impostor ; the trailing antery exchanged for a tight vest and girdle of shawl ; and the pretty Helmas Hanoum and the adventurous Hafiz busied, amid their merriment, in preparing, over the glowing char-

coal of the brazier, the savoury pillauf of the mystified Suleiman ; who, on his arrival at the apartment in which he had left the negress, found her still squatted quietly on the cushion, and with more haste than courtesy bade her summon him on the morrow to fulfil his pledge.

The slave rose, bowed humbly before him, and, without uttering a syllable, passed into the street. But she was conscious that she was dogged by one of the household of the Merchant ; and it was, moreover, so long since she had enjoyed a sight of the sun and the bustle of the city streets, that she arrived at the empty house beside that of her master by as many turnings and windings as a Greek pirate in the Archipelago ; and the pillauf had been heated, and the fair fingers of the pretty Hanoum had dipped with those of her lover in the dish so often, that, ere the entrance of Zeïnip had been effected through the agency of Hafiz, the feast was at an end ; and the fatigued and hungry negress was fain to content herself with the relics of the yesterday's meal. But this was no misfortune to one who had so merry a tale to tell ; and heartily did the three

226 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

plotters laugh ere the lover departed, at the bold device by which they had unlocked the fourth door of the prison-chamber.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SEVEN DOORS—*continued.*

On the morrow, Suleiman was seated among his merchandize in the tcharchi an hour before his usual time ; but his brow was dark, and his mood more than ordinarily taciturn. He remembered, and, remembering, he deeply regretted, the pledge that he had given to the negress. He had, moreover, passed a wretched night ; he had dreamt of bright eyes and ruby lips, it is true, but he had unfortunately dreamt of them in conjunction with dark-browed negroes, and darker-browed husbands. He had enjoyed a vision of a more than earthly beauty, who had welcomed him to her presence with the assurance that he stood before the favourite wife of the

Sultan ; but, while he gazed in wondering admiration, mingled with a very powerful degree of respectful terror, he had been surrounded by armed slaves, thrown on the ground, bowstrung with the rapidity of lightning, and finally had awoke just as the rapid current of the Bosphorus was consigning him to the tender mercies of the Black Sea.

Now Suleiman was not a man of prowess, but a man of peace—he despised the Jews, and hated the Janissaries : he had neither taste for adventures, nor affection for danger ; and, when he raised his head from the pillow, he thanked Allah and the Prophet, from the very depths of his spirit, that it was all a dream ; and a moment afterwards he shuddered at the recollection of the perils to which he had actually subjected himself through his own headstrong and causeless jealousy. It was, consequently, to escape from his unquiet thoughts and self-reproach, that he hurried to the tcharchi with such unwonted diligence, in the hope of finding amusement in the passing scene ; but ever and anon, as he saw the gleam of a yashmac in the dis-

tance, a cold chill crept over him, and made his shaven head feel for an instant as though it were covered with bristles.

Hour after hour wore on, however, and he began to nurse a vague and timidly indulged belief that the wayward beauty had repented her bold enterprize, and even to hope that she had suffered herself to relent in favour of Hafiz, and had accepted his offering ; when, as he was carefully readjusting the folds of a shawl which had been hastily put aside on the previous day, he saw the son of Najib approaching him with a rapid step.

“ Khosh geldin—you are welcome : ” said the Merchant, as the young man stopped beside his carpet, wishing him, at the moment in which he uttered the greeting, safely deposited in the great cemetery of the city : “ affiet ollah—much pleasure attend you ; can I serve you in aught ? or are you only whiling away the time until the mid-day prayer ? ”

“ Nay, not so ; ” replied Hafiz, as he returned the salutation. “ I am hurried even more than my wont on this occasion ; and, therefore, pray

230 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

you to show me, with what speed you may, all the cachemires of Thibet on which you can lay your hand. My father's stock is exhausted, and I am commissioned to make a purchase for the wife of a rich Bey."

"Of a Bey, said you?" demanded the Merchant, as unconcernedly as he could, while he was in the act of taking down some merchandize from one of the shelves. "Are you sure that her husband is a Bey?"

"Have it—yes; she is the wife of Hassan Bey, who served for several years in Tripoli, and who now inhabits a house near the fortress of the Seven Towers. She desires a new shawl for the feast of the Baïram."

"And she has commissioned you to select it for her—is it so?" asked Suleiman, as he looked steadily towards the youth.

"Mashallah! that were a tale for a mas-saldjhe" * — laughed Hafiz; "'tis the good Bey himself who has charged me to make the bargain: and I must make a successful one, or it will fare ill with me, for Hassan is not a man

* Professional story-teller.

to trifle with. He has been so many years accustomed to have every thing his own way, that he is not particular about the propriety of the manner in which he manifests his displeasure. I never look at him without fancying that I see a bowstring peeping from amid the folds of his girdle."

Suleiman actually shivered with terror as he sat. "Just now," whispered Hafiz confidentially, as he bent towards the Merchant; "all gives way before the beautiful young Gul-süy Hanoum his new wife; but her favour is precarious, for it has been insinuated to the Bey that she is not so devoted to him as it behoves her to be. But who shall say?" and he looked up archly into the face of his listener.

"Wallah billah—by the Prophet! are we Musselmauns that we thus talk together of a woman!" murmured Suleiman deprecatingly: "what is it to you or to me, Effendim, if it be so or no?"

Again Hafiz laughed. "You say well; to us it is indeed bosh—nothing. So now we will examine the shawls."

232 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

But the husband of Helmas Hanoum had heard too little or too much — too little as it regarded the unknown beauty herself, and too much as it regarded her husband, for a man who was bound hand and foot to risk his life in the furtherance of a woman's caprice. Yet how to lead back the discourse to the point at which he wished to arrive, he knew not ; for the Turks, even among themselves, do not make their women a subject of conversation or comment ; and thus, with all the terrors of the uncompromising Bey before his eyes, coupled with the consciousness that he was about to beard him in his very den, he was compelled to turn over shawl after shawl, and to expatiate on the beauties and qualities of each, while visions of fear, and peril, and jeopardy, were crowding across his brain.

“ What have I to do,” he asked himself almost aloud, “ with the light-headed and wilful wife of another man, and that man, moreover, a Bey and a soldier ? avret der — it is a woman. Have I not counted nearly seventy years since the Prophet first blew the breath of life into my

nostrils? Is not my beard gray, and my hand weakened? Is it for me to measure myself with boys?" But all these reflections availed nothing; and, just as Hafiz, after quarrelling with the quality of one shawl and the cost of another, had flung aside the last with a dissentient gesture, declaring that he should not dare to meet the Bey if he made no better bargain than those offered to him by his father's friend, a negress, whose yashmac almost covered her eyes, walked quietly up to the Merchant, and, without noticing the vicinity of Hafiz, said in a calm tone, "The Effendi awaits you hard by—I am to conduct you to him." And the paralyzed Suleiman, without a word, cast all his costly goods upon the floor of the little store-room behind him, locked the door, and, shuffling on his slippers, prepared to follow his ebony-coloured guide, like one under a spell.

One glance, and but one, passed between the slave and Hafiz, and that was unnoticed by the Merchant, who was absorbed in the trembling discomfort of his own terrors; and in the next instant the heavily-draped negress was threading

her way along the narrow streets of the tcharchi, followed at some distance by her victim.

They moved onward very slowly, for the pathways were thronged with passengers; but at length they emerged into the open streets of the city, and Suleiman remarked, with something like a sensation of joy, that their road did not lie in the direction of the Seven Towers, whence it was evident that the troublesome beauty could not purpose to receive him beneath the roof of her husband.

On turning an abrupt corner, the Merchant found himself suddenly in a street little frequented, and, as it chanced, at that moment saw no human being near him except his mysterious conductress, who was standing a few paces from the opening, evidently awaiting his approach. He did not accelerate his pace, however, but rather walked more slowly, for he dreaded all communication with the dusky piece of mysticism who had beguiled him into his present predicament; while the slave, on her side, appeared perfectly indifferent to every thing save the object that she sought to attain, and contented

herself by exclaiming, when he at length reached her side; “ So far, so well—lightly falls the foot of him who is summoned by a Pasha’s wife : aferin—well done, Effendim ; the Hanoum will rejoice to find that her bidding has been so joyously obeyed.”

A cold dew rose to the brow of the worthy Suleiman, but he did not dare to ask a question, as the slave, having uttered her extraordinary address, again moved forward. The wife of Hassan the Jeweller had grown into the favourite of Hassan Bey, and again into the consort of a Pasha, within the twenty-four hours since he had first heard of her—There was but another step to take—he had now only to learn that she was an inmate of the Sultan’s harem, and his doom would be sealed ! He remembered his dream, and trembled ; and, as the negress from time to time looked back to assure herself that he followed, he each moment expected to have the dreaded intelligence poured into his quailing ears. But no such misfortune as this befel him ; for his companion never addressed him again until they reached the narrow and squalid street

which terminates in the Tchernberlè Tasch, or Burnt Pillar. This celebrated column was at that period nearly perfect; the figure of Apollo, one of the masterpieces of Phidias, which had originally crowned it, was indeed gone; but the delicate garlands of oak-leaves, that encircled it at regular distances from its base to its summit, were yet perfect; and the marble was but slightly stained with fire-marks.

About midway of the street the negress paused before the gate of a dreary-looking house; and having fixed one long, significant gaze on the Merchant, beat upon the door, and was instantly admitted. Suleiman took several turns along the rude and rugged paving, and delayed as long as he safely could, ere he reluctantly followed her example, and then, with a trembling hand, he raised the ponderous knocker, and heard its harsh sound slowly die away in the void beyond.

He was not kept long in suspense. The door flew back, and, as he passed the threshold, closed slowly behind him; his old acquaintance Semsi was in waiting, and he obeyed her silent

gesture, and followed her through a long and dusky passage, which looked as though the daylight had never penetrated its gloom. There was no matting upon the floor; and, even stealthily as he moved along, the unfortunate Merchant could hear the echo of his own footsteps, and almost the beatings of his heart. Every tale of terror to which he had ever listened came fresh to his memory; and he submitted to his fate unquestioning, like one who felt that he had gone too far to recede, and that escape was now hopeless.

The passage terminated at a door, before which hung a tapestried curtain, and the negress, having flung it aside, bade him enter without ceremony. For the first moment he could not distinguish anything, though he was conscious that the slave was still beside him; but in the next, a strong glare burst forth from the upper end of the chamber, as a hand flung upon the brazier by which the apartment was heated a quantity of aromatic wood. When the smoke cleared away, Suleiman could just discover that a female, whose dress glittered with gold embroidery, lay reclined

upon a pile of cushions spread on the floor ; and, while he was yet employed in endeavouring to obtain a view of her features, she clapped her hands, and half a dozen slaves entered with lights.

Suleiman rubbed his eyes, and fancied that he must be the sport of a dream. The whole apartment was the very embodiment of splendour and luxury. It was like awakening in the Prophet's paradise after the sleep of the grave. The floor was covered with Persian carpets ; the sofas were sprinkled with embroidered flowers, and looked like a petrified parterre—draperies of gorgeously tinted silk veiled the latticed windows—and, in the midst of this scene of costly comfort reclined its unveiled mistress, in a vestment so resplendent with gold and jewels, that the dazzled Merchant cast down his eyes, like one who has inadvertently looked upon the sun.

But he was not long suffered to remain in this attitude of silent wonder. A voice which sounded strangely familiar to his ear bade him welcome, and invited him to approach ; and, as he advanced further into the apartment, his eye

fell on a group of splendidly-dressed slaves, who were standing near the couch of their mistress. Coffee was served to him in silence; and then a chibouque of cherry-wood, with a mouth-piece of the finest and palest amber, was put into his hand by an attendant, young, beautiful, and graceful, who bore so strong a resemblance to his imprisoned wife, that he started as he took the pipe, and almost suffered it to escape his clasp.

“ You have done me much grace, Effendim; ” said the lady of the revel, as soon as the proper ceremonies had been observed towards her guest: “ khosh geldin — you are welcome; and I am grateful to you for running so great a risk to indulge one of my idle caprices. The Pasha, my husband, is jealous and lynx-eyed, and we shall be fortunate if we contrive your departure without exciting suspicion. But we will not talk of him—My slave Semsî, by whom you were summoned, has doubtlessly told you that a new whim, on whose gratification I am, as usual, determinedly bent, has compelled me to apply to your generosity. Bana bak—

look at me—am I one to be thwarted? I need not explain more; I will merely put before you the toys which I desire to give in exchange for one of your most costly cachemires. I know all the risk that I incur in order to work out my pleasure, and I am grateful to you for having so willingly shared it. Joy and fear are not more opposite in their effects than in the feeling which they excite towards those who are our partners in the emotion; in joy, we find the pleasure doubled by participation; while, in fear—oh, Effendim, you know not, you cannot guess, the sensation with which a young, and pretty, and idolised wife looks upon the individual, who, at the moment when he pays homage to her beauty, is conscious that, should his devotion be discovered, he can save her by offering himself up a willing sacrifice to her offended husband! Could I not at this instant, were the Pasha to intrude into the harem, vow that I knew not your errand, and had never sanctioned your entrance? Nothing could be more simple; and as to the result of such a declaration, it were vain to expatiate on it—Mash-

allah ! Hassan Pasha is too methodical to leave any one in doubt on such a subject. ‘ Gul-süy Hanoum,’ he will say to me, ‘ you are the light of my eyes, and the sun of my sky, and rather would I put out the beam of the one, and miss the warmth of the other, than know that they had been shared by the Sovereign of the world—the Padishah of the most glorious empire of the earth—’ ”

The Merchant wiped the gathering damps from his brow, and only groaned a reply.

“ Korkma — fear not ; what care I for all these love-sentences ? ” pursued the lady, “ will they buy me a cachemire, or give me a pleasant dream ? Are they not mere words ? Perhaps you have a fair wife in your harem, Effendim ; nay, I am sure you have, for your beard is white, and your days are numbered, and you would be a divanè—an idiot — not to seek some solace for your age in bright smiles and gentle words ; and if you have a wife, young, and pretty, and ready-witted, as women will be, though all good Musselmauns would fain see them otherwise, you must know that she would

rather have one purse* than a score of compartments—from you at least. Yet wherefore waste your time with idle talk, when every instant may be fraught with danger? Diliram"—and, as she spoke, the slave who looked and moved like the Merchant's imprisoned wife, advanced, and bent meekly before her; "show to Suleiman Effendi the toys which I desire to barter with him."

She was obeyed on the instant; the attendant silently withdrew, and in a moment returned, bearing a tray, which she deposited at the feet of the visitor. It was covered with a gold-embroidered napkin, which was hastily thrown aside, and the first object that met the eye of Suleiman was a jewelled bracelet, whose form and setting were as familiar to him as the precepts of the Korân. Beside it lay an essence-box of ivory, small, and quaintly-fashioned; and both were pillow'd on a costly cachemire of pale yellow, with a border of green and crimson!

Let those who have writhed under the visita-

* Generally containing 500 piastres (or £5); all Imperial presents in specie are made in "purses."

tion of the night-mare picture to themselves the sensations of Suleiman ! He looked long and earnestly on the objects of barter as they were spread out before him — he handled them each in their turn, and they were all real and palpable—they were offered to him for sale, and he could swear that they were his own ! In his bewilderment he turned towards the Pasha's wife, and gazed keenly and inquiringly upon her. The haughty beauty bore his steady look unshinkingly : not a blush, not a word escaped her ; and it was strange how the expression of those large dark eyes added to the mystification of the Merchant ; there was a mocking light in them that withered his very soul ! He had seen them before, he knew not where nor when : his memory played the traitor, and his senses reeled : and meanwhile there lay the bracelet, the essence-box, and the shawl — the ferocious Pasha in perspective — the imprudent beauty in presence — and a cloud of phantoms, shapeless, indefinite, and mystical, writhing and winding through all the intricate angles of his imagination. There too stood the slave, the young

and mysterious slave, who looked and moved so like his own wife! The Merchant instinctively buried his hand in his girdle—this at least must be a delusion, for there were the keys: and hence it was only fair to infer that he was under a spell—that the Evil Eye was on him—and that the bracelet, the essence-box, and the yellow cachemire, were all phantoms, engendered by the fever of his own over-heated brain.

While he was yet abandoned to his bewilderment, the slaves, as if to increase it, struck up a wild, shrill concert of voices and zebecs, which rang through the saloon, and whistled in the ears of Suleiman like an east wind. Well nigh maddened by the noise, the mystification, and the terror, which grew deeper each moment from the necessity of its concealment, the unhappy Merchant began hurriedly to offer he scarce knew what, for the hated objects of barter; and anxious to escape from the scene of torment, swore to the dark-eyed lady of the revel that she should turn over every bale in his store, and select the shawl which pleased her, be its value what

it might. The offer was accepted on the instant; nor was an effort made to detain the liberal Suleiman when he had pledged himself to observe, and faithfully to fulfil the compact ; while, on his part, he as willingly consented to leave behind him the valuable pledges that were to be given in exchange. He lost not a moment in descending from the sofa, and shuffling on his slippers ; and having made his obeisance to the hostess, who was sunning herself in the light of her own eyes, as they were reflected from a circular mirror set into a frame of ostrich feathers, he lifted the tapestry hanging that veiled the door of the gorgeous apartment, and passed into the void and echoing gallery beyond.

But no officious Semsi followed to guide him through the dark labyrinth—no companionship save that of a loud and mocking peal of laughter from the party whom he had just quitted, beguiled the difficulty of his progress ; and even that died away as suddenly as it had burst forth. Not a single lamp shed its protecting light to save him from yawning staircases and gloomy passages; and

he wandered on slowly and painfully, with fear and trembling, bewildering himself more and more in the intricacies of the building, in silence and in darkness, until after the lapse of an hour, when he distinguished in the distance the glimmering of a sickly light, towards which he cautiously advanced, in the hope that it might afford him a mean of escape from his malicious enemies. Not a sound was to be heard as he neared the beacon, save the dull echo of his own footsteps ; and he consequently became sufficiently reassured to quicken his pace, and to pass without hesitation the threshold of the vast and apparently empty apartment in which the lamp was burning. But he had no sooner done so than the door closed with violence behind him, cutting off all hope of escape by the gallery along which he had passed, and the sickly lamp gave out one strong burst of light, and instantly expired. In that brief interval, however, momentary as it was, the trembling Merchant discovered the whole extent of his misfortune ; nor was any time permitted him for preparation : in an instant he was seized—flung

on the ground — held down by powerful hands, amid low and mocking laughter — and in five minutes he had fainted beneath the bastinado.

The sun was bright upon the domes and minarets of the city, when Suleiman the Shawl-merchant painfully stretching his limbs, and opening his haggard eyes, found himself extended on a marble slab in the Armenian cemetery of Pera, beneath the light shade of a blossoming acacia. He might well have believed that all the scene through which he had lately passed was but a hag-ridden dream, had not the swollen and smarting soles of his dishonoured feet assured him to the contrary. He could not doubt the extent of his wrong ; and if he did not instantly lay his complaint before the Cadi, it was simply because he was unable to make his way to the Bosphorus, and to pass over to Stamboul unassisted.

Several hours were consequently wasted, to the great disgust of the Merchant, among the Christian graves, ere he was gladdened by the approach of an Armenian jeweller, who came, as his wont was towards sunset; to smoke his

chibouque beside the grave of one of his relatives. Suleiman knew him well, as he had often traded with him in the bezenstein ; and to him, therefore, he confided, without hesitation, the history of his discomfiture, taking care, however, as he subsequently did in his complaint before the Cadi, to conceal the fact of feminine agency ; and contenting himself with the declaration that he had been decoyed to this house of mystery for the purposes of commerce.

By the agency of Takour-Oglou, the Armenian jeweller, a carriage was soon procured, in which the suffering Suleiman was safely deposited on the wooden pier at Topp-hannè, and there embarked in a caïque for Stamboul ; where, on his arrival at home, he lost no time in laying his case before the Cadi, and demanding justice.

His description of the house was so circumstantial, and he was so positive as to its accuracy, that the officers of justice found it at once, and thundered for admittance without a moment's hesitation ; but the sturdy strokes which they beat upon the door only produced a long-sustained echo as they died slowly away in the

distance ; and when at length their importunity excited the attention of the neighbours, an old crone, closely muffled in a scarf of blue and white checked linen, tottered forth from one of the most squalid-looking tenements of the wretched street, and delivered up the key of the empty house, with an assurance that it had been long uninhabited ; and that her son, who was pursuing his trade in one of the Archipelegan Islands, and whose patrimony it was, desired with all his heart to dispose of it, even at a loss.

The followers of the Cadi left the withered woman to pour forth her information to the half dozen individuals whom the outcry in the street had attracted, and rushed through the entrance-court into the desolate gallery beyond. But they discovered no object in any one of the empty and mouldering apartments which bore testimony to the truth of the Merchant's story.

Weather-stained walls — faded frescoes, peeling from the neglected ceilings — doors hanging loosely upon broken hinges—and casements from which the perished lattices were dropping in

fragments—were about them in every direction, but not a trace of recent inhabitation was perceptible ; and, after having traversed the whole building, and searched every room and gallery, they were compelled to vacate the premises with a firm conviction that the Merchant had misled them, and had altogether mistaken the locality of his disgrace.

But it was not so : and during the interval which succeeded ere the enraged and baffled Suleiman had regained the use of his feet, and was once more enabled to visit the subterranean, many a jest and jibe of which he was the subject, had lightened the tedium of the prison-harem ; and more than once had Hafiz twined about his head the costly calemkier,* in which he had enacted the Pasha's wife ; and practised before the anali (or hand-mirror) of the treacherous Helmas Hanoum the same languishing grimaces with which he had favoured her unhappy husband.

Well might the youthful lover exult over the

* Painted handkerchief.

success of his treacherous artifices — for five of the seven locks were now unloosed, and more than half his adventurous task was accomplished !

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SEVEN DOORS.—*continued.*

SULEIMAN was one morning descending to the vault, when, as he was turning the key of the last door which separated him from the prison-chamber, he was startled by the sounds of violent contention ; and he paused for a few seconds ere he entered, in order to acquaint himself with the cause of the outcry. High and shrill rose the voice of his young wife, but higher and shriller still were the tones of Zeïnip ; and the amazement of the Merchant was extreme when he discovered that the gentle Helmas Hanoum was actually in anger against her long-favoured attendant ; and that the pampered negress, forgetful of all the indulgence and kindness of her mistress, was casting back

every reproach, and retorting every injurious epithet. Had Suleiman seen a purse of gold upon his path, he could not have been more rejoiced ! A quiet smile played about his lip, and he stroked down his beard with a gesture of complacency and self-gratulation truly enviable. Now every mystery would be unravelled ; if, indeed, as he was still sometimes inclined to suspect, the tenants of his pretty prison were privy to all his annoyances. A quarrel between the conspirators would necessarily involve discovery ; for what angry woman ever kept the secret of her adversary ? Thus the Merchant listened with all his ears ; and the contention continued long enough to convince him that the belligerents would show each other no quarter when his appearance afforded to them the opportunity of revenging their imaginary wrongs.

But with all his powers of hearing on the stretch, Suleiman could not gather amid the violence of the quarrel a single sentence tending to throw any light upon the subject on which he was anxious to be better informed ; and, accordingly, making a great rattling with the

stupendous bunch of keys that he carried in his hand, he ultimately threw back the door, and stood before the flushed and furious women, who seemed well nigh exhausted by the violence of their contest.

I shall not stop to detail the torrent of words by which the Merchant was assailed : suffice it, that one plucked him by the sleeve, and that the other twitched him by the robe — that one pulled him one way, and the other dragged him the other — that one screamed into his right ear, and the other into his left — that they teased, tormented, and almost terrified him, ere he could produce the slightest appearance of peace, and make himself master of the very obscure and mystified cause of contention.

Strange and startling inferences had escaped both from the lady and her attendant, as the war of words went on ; and ever and anon the Merchant imagined that he had glimpses of a mystery which he would fain have fathomed ; but even as he seemed about to grasp it, it eluded him, and he remained fully as bewildered as ever.

In vain did he attempt to pacify his fair and furious wife—she was resolved — she might be a prisoner — he might deprive her of the light of heaven, and the free air which was the heritage of the happy—but he should not compel her to share her dungeon with one who had become hateful to her. Nay more—if Suleiman persisted in retaining the obnoxious negress in his service, the determined little beauty threatened him with her enduring and unmeasured wrath. She should be sold—absolutely sold in the slave-market—disposed of to the best bidder—banished for ever from all chance of offending the eyes of her irate mistress ; and, despite his better reason — for, amid all the declamation and violence of his wife, Suleiman was quite unable to ascertain of what crime Zeïnip had actually been guilty—he was compelled to acquiesce in all that was required of him, and to promise that he would without delay, purchase 'a younger and more submissive attendant for his angry helpmate.

With some difficulty he, however, prevailed on the young Hanoum to retain the negress until he had decided on her successor ; and, having

carried this point as an especial favour to himself, he quitted the vault, leaving both the women silent and sulky.

On the morrow the Merchant sauntered to the slave-market ; his brow was clouded, and his humour dark ; for he was too fully convinced of the powers of elocution possessed by Zeinip, not to feel painfully certain that his prison-harem would afford a fruitful topic for verbal display in the next family of which she became an inmate. Suleiman dreaded ridicule with a most holy dread ; and he actually shivered as he remembered how legitimate a subject his jealousy had supplied to the discarded negress. But for this evil there was no remedy, save retaining the delinquent in his own service ; and ere he reached the enclosure appropriated to the sale of Kurd and Abyssinian slaves, he accordingly determined to effect a purchase if possible, in order to pacify his wife ; and then to propose to her the luxurious alternative of retaining both the slaves in her service. The more the Merchant pondered on his scheme, the more feasible it appeared ; for he deemed it only probable that a

storm which had arisen so suddenly, might as suddenly be calmed ; and that the morrow might see the disgraced favourite reinstated in the good graces of her mistress. The thought was a pleasant one ; and as Suleiman moved on into the centre of the market-court, he passed his hand caressingly down his beard ; for this transient tempest had at least proved to him beyond all further doubt, that the extraordinary and mysterious annoyances which had lately ruffled him, had not originated in the vault.

Slowly, therefore, and complacently, the Merchant stepped into the midst of the groupes who were squatted on their rugs and mats under the broad sun, and laughing out their thoughtlessness as they waited to be purchased. Once or twice he paused, attracted by a merry face, or a bright eye ; but he resolved to make the tour of the court ere he committed himself by word or sign ; and accordingly he pursued his way until he stood beside a solitary negress ; who, veiled, and clad more decently than the generality of those by whom she was surrounded, appeared to be wholly absorbed by her own thoughts.

Suleiman started as his eye fell upon her—he paused upon his path, and fastened his gaze on the apparently unconscious negress like one fascinated—and then he silently beckoned to an aged, coarse-looking Turk, who was quietly smoking his chibouque on a faded Persian carpet, a few paces from the slave.

“She is yours?” said the Merchant enquiringly, as the hoary dealer in human beings deliberately obeyed his summons.

“She is mine,” was the brief reply.

“I would see her,” pursued the Merchant.

“Allaha es marladek — Allah preserve you! the Effendi is lord, and I am his slave;” said the owner of the negress, as he pointed to the yashmac which she wore. “Musna, unveil.”

Without the delay of a moment he was obeyed. The woman unwound the scarf of fair white muslin which had concealed her face, and stood before him with a smile upon her lips.

“Zeïnip!” exclaimed the excited Suleiman; but his ejaculation was met by a stolid and unconscious look from both the slave and her master. “Answer me, Sister of Sheitan!” he

persisted, "answer me for your life, how came you here?"

"Aman!" groaned out her owner; but the negress did not move a muscle.

"Ajaib chay — they are wonders both!" cried the furious Suleiman, turning fiercely on the old man. "Dog! whence came this woman? In what hellish plot have you engaged, that you bring her here to laugh at me to my beard? Are there no laws in Stamboul, that you dare to trifle thus with one who trades in the city, and spreads his prayer-carpet in the mosque of St. Sophia? Am I a giaour, that you thus defile the grave of my father?"

"Eh vah — mercy on us! What means my lord?" asked the slave-owner in his turn: "Is not the woman an Abyssinian? and did I not buy her honestly at the market of Adrianople. When the sun rose this morning, four of them occupied my carpet: the day is well nigh spent, and Musna alone is left: the rest have found purchasers among the Effendis of the city. Even she herself should have been provided with a new master ere this, had I not demanded

a heavy sum for one so well skilled in housewifery. A young gallant cheapened her only an hour since for the harem of his mother, and we parted for a hundred pitiful piastres—Look at her, Effendim; if, indeed, you lack a slave to tend your daughters—and surely my lord, whose beard is white, hath daughters—for you will scarcely meet with one so skilful in her duties."

"Haif! haif!—shame! shame!" impatiently interposed Suleiman: "I tell you, rogue and juggler as you are, that the slave is already mine, and I dare her to deny it."

"Amān! amān!—alas! alas!" sighed the old man in his turn, affecting a look of deep concern: "would that the stricken one could obey your bidding."

"What mean you, hoary sinner?" demanded his angry listener: "ne oldou—what has happened? I am weary of this folly, and can bear no more."

"On my soul be it;" answered the slave-dealer, with a gesture of deep humility, while the negress calmly and deliberately readjusted her veil: "Who shall murmur against the

decrees of Allah, and the will of the holy Prophet? Were it not so, the piastres had been mine, and I had long ere this shaken the dust of the city streets from my feet—Musna is skilful in the harem, and ready at the bath; but my lord bids her speak, and she cannot obey him—she is swift of foot, and willing of hand, but words are denied her—Musna is dumb!"

The Merchant looked incredulous, and his resolution was taken at once. "Bosh der—it is nothing;" he said hastily; "even thus I will purchase her—name your price, and if you be neither a Jew nor a Giaour, the slave is mine."

"The Effendi will pardon me that I intrude on his privacy;" said a detested voice close to the elbow of the exasperated Suleiman; "I come but to pay over to Mustafa a few hundreds of piastres for an Abyssinian slave, and I will immediately retire. Inshallah! the purses are true, and the negress is mine, is it not so, Mustafa?" And Hafiz turned to the old man, who was engaged in counting the money which he had put into his hand.

"She is your's;" said Mustafa gravely; and

motioning to the negress to follow her new master, he was about to address the Shawl-merchant, when he was interrupted by an angry exclamation, as Suleiman flung himself across the path of the slave, and dared her to follow the son of Najip.

But the dumb woman, apparently unsuspicuous of his meaning, merely moved aside, and made her way to the gate by a less direct line; while Hafiz, with a light laugh, affected to treat the interference of Suleiman as a jest, and said gaily as he moved away; “The Effendi may be right in deeming my bargain a poor one; but my mother hath already many about her who have the gift of speech, and to her it will be little drawback that I bring her one who cannot add to the outcry.”

The Shawl-merchant literally gasped for breath; he dared not offer any open violence, nor detain the woman by force, lest he should be seized by the kavashlir,* as a disorderly person, and hurried before the Cadi; while, mingled with his rage, came an intrusive memory of his former

* Police of the city.

mistake, when he made a prisoner of the slave Semsi, who had doubtless amused her mischievous mistress, and the whole harem, with an embellished version of his jealousy, and of the hints which in his anger he had inadvertently suffered to escape him. Under these circumstances he considered it more expedient to permit the departure of the mysterious negress and her purchaser; and to endeavour, this time at least, to entrap them ere they had leisure to rejoice over the success of their new scheme, should they indeed be wound up in the web of his annoyances.

But the felech—the constellation of Suleiman was adverse. An araba, drawn up by the side of the street, received the slave; and the driver, having bent for an instant towards Hafiz, who gave his directions in so low a voice as to be inaudible to the bystanders, drove off at a pace as rapid as the defective pavement would permit.

The result requires little explanation; for the speed of the Merchant was no match for that of the carriage; and when he at length reached the vault, he was more vexed than surprised to be

half deafened by the peals of laughter which resounded through the subterranean ; and to find the lady and her attendant, in the full flow of confidence and hilarity.

“ Effendim,” commenced the Merchant sternly ; “ I have purchased for you a new slave, who will be with you to-morrow ; and I have transferred Zeïnip, at some pecuniary loss, to a Cæsarian Merchant, who has been deputed to supply the wives of the Pasha of the Dardanelles with four attendants. To-night, therefore, she will remain in the vault, but at dawn her new master will be here to claim her.”

“ Oghour ola—heaven speed you ! that were a tale worth telling ;” laughed his wife. “ Know you so little of a woman’s nature as to believe that she will nurse her wrath for so many hours ? If you take Zeïnip from me I shall fall sick ; I will neither touch my zebec, nor sing the ballads to which you love to listen. See then if you wish to part us.”

The Merchant ground his teeth, and all his doubts and suspicions came back upon him — but he was powerless ; and profiting by past ex-

perience he resolved to affect an indifference which he was far from feeling ; and to endeavour, by appearing unconscious that any mystification was intended, to throw the conspirators off their guard, and thus take them in their own toils.

Acting upon this somewhat tardy resolution, Suleiman smoothed his ruffled brow, called a smile to his rigid lips, and gave a ready assent to his wife's new arrangement, to the no small astonishment of his tormentors, who were prepared for an obstinate opposition. And so long, indeed, did he linger in the vault, that the pretty Hanoum began to fear that the patience of Hafiz would fairly fail him ere the departure of her incomprehensible husband !

At length, however, Suleiman departed, quite unconscious of the next and final surprize which awaited him ; and when he was out of hearing, Hafiz sprang laughingly through the chasm, and bounded into the centre of the floor.

“ Joy ! joy ! ” he exclaimed, as the young beauty rose from the sofa to receive him ; “ six of the doors are conquered—six of the locks are shivered—six of the keys are lost—and for the

seventh, my Sultana — for the **seventh and the last**, we have an easy remedy. **The araba yet waits** which brought our faithful **Zeïnip** from the slave-market, where she **played her part like** the favourite of a Padishah*—**the caique dances** on the ripple at the pier that **juts into the harbour** beside ‘the Gate of the **Garden**’—**that trusty caique** which is to bear **us across into Asia**; there all is prepared for **our flight**; and when once we have reached the **mountains**, we may defy all the jealous husbands in **Stamboul**. But you weep, my houri! **Light of my eyes,** and shadow of my existence—**do you regret** that your word is pledged?”

For a moment the weeping **Hanoum made no reply**: her woman-spirit quailed for an instant; but her resolution was taken; and, placing her hand in that of her lover, she turned on him a smile, in whose light her tears were forgotten.

Zeïnip, meanwhile, was busying herself among the wardrobe of her mistress, whence she brought a golden bracelet, a **cachemire shawl**, and a box of essence; the prayer-cloth in which

* An Emperor.

Hafiz had enacted the kneeling slave—the head-dress that he had worn as the Pasha's wife, and the dark feridjhe in which she had herself figured in the slave-market — and having laid them separately upon the table, she disturbed the tête-à-tête of the lovers, to remind them that her portion of the comedy was concluded.

“ Mashallah ! our good Zeïnip hath more prudence than we can boast, my Sultana ;” exclaimed Hafiz ; “ we waste moments that we can ill spare — here are six of our successful engines — and here ” — and as he spoke he took from amid the folds of his girdle seven keys, six of which he broke deliberately one after the other, and added to the separate heaps — one only remained entire, and that he laid alone and apart.

“ Sun of my sky !” he murmured, as the muffled Hanoum prepared to follow him through the subterranean ; “ Tchabouk, tchabouk, gide-lim—quick, quick, let us go—our sands are gold until we have left Stamboul behind us — they must not run to waste ; and bak, janum — see, my soul ! he who was your husband at least

**owes me one debt of gratitude — for I have left
him a goodly key with which to secure the door
of his pretty prison-cage, when his bird is
flown !”**

PART III.

CHAPTER XIX.

“ By the soul of the Prophet ’tis a good story !” exclaimed Saïfula Pasha ; “ I know not when I have heard a better ! But was not Suleiman the Shawl-merchant an ass, and the father of asses, to let his beard be plucked out, handful by handful, by a pair of plotting women, and a stripling ? Allah buyûk der—Allah is great ; he could have had no more wit than a dromedary.”

“ And what became of the kiupek — the dog of a husband ?” demanded the laughing Carimfil Hanoum : “ Did he keep his next harem above

the earth? or did he try the same experiment a second time?"

" History makes no further mention of him ;" replied the young Greek, with assumed gravity. " What should it tell of a man who had placed his reliance on seven morsels of metal, when he might have been safer by far had he trusted to appearances from the first, and not taken to his house the promised wife of another ? There is a better moral in my story, kadeun ;" she continued, turning towards the Circassian, " to those who look for it, than appears upon the surface. The gold-seekers do not carry away in their vessels the water of the stream, but they wash the sand when they would find the ore."

" Yavash, yavash — softly, softly ;" said the Satrap : " we care not for any thing further than the fable itself — the moral is but beng* — it sets one to sleep."

" Your highness drinks of the mirage, like one who wanders in the desert ;" interposed Katinka ; " the tale that I have told is no fable; and the lovers yet live."

* A Narcotic.

"Pek ahi—it is well done ;" said the Pasha yawning : " As for the Merchant, he was a domous—a hog ; and they spiced his dolmas for him after a wise fashion ; but you have measured your tale with a mitkal,* and have filled it to overflowing, for the night has grown on us since you began it. Had it not been a good story, you would have been cramming our mouths with hashish ;† but it has truly been as light as the air-bag of a camel,‡ and our eyelids are scarcely yet weighed down."

It was, as the Satrap had remarked, wearing deep into the night ; and when sweetmeats and coffee had again been served, he descended from the sofa, resumed his papooshes, and returned to the salemliek, leaving the two friends once more together.

" I cannot sleep, khatoun ;" said the Circassian : " your tale, merry as it was, has troubled me. Have we not been laughing at the Pasha to his beard ?"

* Turkish measure.

† A Narcotic.

‡ When these animals are distressed on their passage through the desert, they blow from their mouths a light blood-tinted skin which preserves them from the floating sand.

" His highness would not **listen to the moral**, janum ;" replied the laughing Greek ; " **his wit**, like the piety of a santon, sometimes sleeps, and he cares not to have it awakened. **He will** dream pleasant dreams on **his sofa to-night** — Care not for him, but rather let us pass into the garden, and breathe the **sweet air of the lime-blossoms**; for my brain throbs with **fatigue**, and the soft odours of the flowers will calm its pulses."

A fond smile was the **only answer**, as the Circassian thrust her small feet into her embroidered slippers, and led the **way to the palace-terrace**. Thence they descended, by a flight of marble steps, into the parterre; and having lingered awhile beside the basin, to see the scales of the gold fish with which it was filled glitter in the moonlight, they slowly entered the lime-avenue.

The night wind was making gentle minstrelsy with the leaves, and the flowers were pouring themselves out in perfume, while the fall of the many fountains came soothingly to the ear, and completed the luxury of the hour.

" It is in moments like these ; " said Katinka, as the two ladies flung themselves down among the cushions which a slave who followed them heaped above a Persian carpet, under a stately tulip tree ; " moments of external calm, when the moonlight seems to slumber on the beautiful bosom of the earth, that the ashes of the past sweep in clouds over the soul. Carimfil, does not your spirit fall back upon the days when, loved and loving, as woman loves and is loved but once, your arm wreathed in that of Anastasius, you wandered, surrounded by an atmosphere of delight, among the scented groves and beside the sparkling streams of your delicious land ? When the words of your chosen one rose on the air like perfume ; and the light of his eyes outshone the watching moon ! Are the ties which bind you to the Moslem so holy as those which linked you to your first love ? The chains may be golden, but still they are mere fetters ; and the free spirit sickens beneath constraint."

" Of what avail, sister of my soul, are such inquiries ? " asked the Circassian in reply ; " kismet—it is my fate ! You have but to look

on my dim eye and my faded cheek, and to remember what I once was, to feel how little all this splendour has touched my heart, though I have been compelled to bow before the power of my constellation. Could I purchase with a year of this empty and profitless profusion one hour such as those to which you have just alluded, how gladly would I crush all my future life into a few short days, and live it out at once in happiness!"

"Na to ne — there it is!" retorted the young Greek; "your heart plays the rebel, and yet you affect to feel horror at the thought of emancipating yourself from your present thrall. Think you that, once more free, I would waste an hour in the harem of the Moslem, were it not from a conviction that the day is not far distant, when——"

"Nay, nay, no more of this to-night;" murmured the Hanoum, as she turned aside her head, and her tears glittered in the moonlight; "my dreams are already evil, and yet I sorrow to awaken. The deep and hopeless grief to which I was a prey ere your arrival has been ex-

changed for an anguish far more acute, and yet to which I cling as though it were a joy."

Katinka smiled, and for a time there was silence, while the Circassian was left to her own thoughts, from which she started suddenly, and turning towards her companion, asked anxiously ; " How will you contrive to inform him that we are here ?"

" Am I not a Greek ?" demanded Katinka ; " sorrow has taught me subtlety. Ere this he must be on his way."

A gush of tears from the beautiful Circassian replied to the intimation, as she threw herself upon the bosom of her friend, and wept aloud.

" Why, this is idle, khatoun !" said the Greek soothingly ; " your fate is in your own hands ; you have but to bid me drive him hence, and he will obey you, and carry his broken heart to his own land."

" He has perchance forgotten me"—sobbed out the fair Carimfil.

" Do the flowers forget the sun, or the lake the moonlight ? Come they not at their appointed hour ? Wherefore then should you, who are

brighter than the flowers, and fairer than the moonlight, doubt that your lover will fly to your feet when he is summoned there?"

The argument was unanswerable ; for there is no consolation so satisfactory to a pretty woman as that which is deduced from her own beauty ; and although, in the present instance, the fair mourner asked no further assurance of her lover's probable advent, she began to consider it as less doubtful than it had appeared a moment back ; and it was consequently with a bright smile that she listened to a thousand trifling, but, to her, interesting details, which her companion poured into her willing ear as the time went by unheeded. The attendant slaves, who occupied a mat a short distance from their mistresses, had long fallen asleep, lulled by the plashing waters and the sighing wind : but the dreams of the two friends were waking dreams, rendered the more delightful from a sense of their reality.

Katinka was the first to remark that the shadows were growing shorter and fainter, and the night almost spent.

“ We are playing truant strangely from our gilded cage ; ” she said, as she pressed her lips to the brow of her companion ; “ and may chance to prove our imprudence to-morrow by our suffering — and lest we should have already incurred this penalty, I will, ere we leave the garden, sing to you a song which you must well remember, for it was a tribute to your own bright eyes, in one of the laughing hours when our visions were only of joy. You cannot have forgotten it — for I, who did but smile because *you* were happy, can yet see the minstrel, seated at your feet beneath a cedar-tree, his mandolin in his hand, and his gaze riveted on the brow of his beloved. Listen——” and she swept the strings of her zebec, and sang her wild ballad to a melody which is sometimes the accompaniment of the graceful Romaika.

SONG OF THE GREEK LOVER.

I've heard of isles beyond the sea
Where summer neither fails nor fades,
Where leaves are ever on the tree,
Where verdure ever clothes the glades—

I've heard of birds so gay and bright,
 That as they hover round the bowers
 Whose blossoms woo the noonday light,
 They look like fair and flying flowers.

I've heard of coral caves, beneath
 The heaving bosom of the ocean;
 Where many a sea-nymph twines her wreath,
 And warbles out with tuneful breath,
 Her young and beautiful emotion—
 I've heard of mountains bleak and bare,
 Shaming with barrenness the vision,
 Which yet embosomed gems as rare
 As ever shone in halls Elysian.

I've heard of fountain goddesses,
 With drooping head and flowing curls,
 Who, in their liquid boddices,
 Whene'er they wept, shed tears of pearls—
 I've heard of serial spirits, flitting
 In beauty through the summer beam;
 I've heard of river-nymphs, calm sitting
 Beside some leaf-embowered stream.

In short, I've heard of many things,
 All beautiful, and bright, and free;
 And 'mid these fond imaginings,
 Lady, my thoughts have flown to thee!

I take the sunshine of the isles,
 Those homes of everlasting spring;
 And as I coin them into smiles,
 Upon thy brow those smiles I fling.

And the bright birds ! I lend their grace,
 Their buoyancy, and happy voices,
 To thy glad tones, and that fair face,
 Which every heart and eye rejoices !

But when I come to nymphs and fays,
 To goddeases, and sprites celestial,
 I drop all metaphoric lays,
 And thank the fates that thou'rt terrestrial !
 For in thy young and sparkling beauty
 Thou art to me more fair by far,
 Than if I tendered mere lip-duty
 To thee, in semblance of a star.

Yes, rather would I wreath around thee,
 A garland of each flower that blows,
 Than have to tell that I had found thee
 A sprite, soft sleeping in a rose—
 And 'twere far pleasanter with thee
 O'er gem-lined rocks to climb and clamber,
 Than thine enchanted form to see
 Enclosed within a wall of amber.

Thus then, though idly I may dream,
 And liken thee to things celestial ;
 I say again—I love thy beam
 The better that it is terrestrial !

“ Ah ! well indeed do I remember it ! ” ex-claimed Carimfil Hanoum, clasping her hands passionately ; but it was now the turn of the young Greek to preach prudence, and to urge the necessity of returning to the house.

"Sleepless eyes will be dim ;" she said, smilingly : "and late vigils make a dull harem ; there are yet some hours to the dawn : let us in, and to rest while we may, kadeun ; it is now too late alike for smiles or tears."

In half an hour the harem of Saifula Pasha was buried in sleep.

CHAPTER XX.

MEANWHILE, a more active scene was transacting elsewhere. A Tatar, who had been profusely recompensed, was despatched to Circassia, to the dwelling of the young Merchant, Anastatius Maniolo polo, with a scroll of parchment, inscribed with delicate Greek characters. The missive was received with a delight which won golden acknowledgments of his fidelity from the lover; who asked not by whom it had been intrusted to him, but retained his services as his own guide on his journey to the province of Saifula Pasha. A short time sufficed for the arrangement of his affairs, which he placed under the superintendence of a Greek friend:

and half wild with the joy of finding his sister still in life, when he had so long wept her as dead; and of learning the undiminished affection of the beautiful girl to whom he had given his heart; he bade adieu to Circassia, accompanied by Safii, his Tatar guide, without having framed one feasible plan for the regulation of his future proceedings; and contented, in the first rush of his delight, to breathe the same air as his loved ones, and to trust to his happy fate for the future.

Anastatius Maniolopolo was, perhaps, in the most enviable frame of mind, as he galloped his fleet steed among the mountains, to which man can attain in this world: careless of the past, enjoying the present, and without a fear for the future! Had not the dead come to life, and the lost one been found? Why then should he dread what was to follow? She would fly with him—she would leave her gilded prison, and once more live over again in his company those glorious hours which the horrors of war had terminated so abruptly.

Such were his thoughts, as, followed by Safii

the Tatar, he reached on the second day of his journey a lovely valley, lying like a huge emerald at the mountain-foot, and traversed by a fair stream, which, fed by a spring in the higher lands, and falling in a natural cascade down the face of the rock, formed in the bottom a lovely river flowing above party-coloured pebbles and sparkling sand, and overarched at intervals by groups of forest-trees, among which the stately and umbrageous maple and the delicate weeping birch were conspicuous ; while tufts of mimosa and henna bushes, with their minute blossoms, as white and as sweet as the flowers of the jas-mine, made the air balmy with their fragrance. Storks and cranes flew over their heads, and numbers of pheasants rested among the branches of the tall trees, which were also vocal with singing birds. The wild vine flung its leafy gar-lands from stem to stem, and the grapes were hanging from it in blushing clusters, wooing the hand of the travellers. Numbers of the Jerhuah or leaping mice,* common in the country, were

* The Jerhuah (otherwise Gerboa) or leaping mouse of Circassia, is also a native of Northern Africa, Nubia, and

sporting on the banks of the river ; and the turf beneath the trees was enamelled with flowers.

It was a scene that Benuzzeer, the Persian Claude, would have loved to paint ; and here the travellers sprang from their saddles, in order to enjoy their noon-tide meal upon the grass ; and while Safii was kindling a fire, and preparing their repast, the lover walked apart on the margin of the stream, and lost himself in visions of delight, such as could only be realized in Peristan.

The sun, riding in mid course, fell brilliantly on every surrounding object, and rendered the freshness of the running water, and the coolness of the long grass beneath the trees, doubly refreshing ; and it was not until he had been twice summoned by his hungry companion, that Maniolopolo abandoned his delicious reverie, to minister to the grosser necessities of existence.

And even then, when the repast was spread

Egypt ; it is about the size of a squirrel, legged like a kangaroo, and has long ears ; it has a habit of laying its tail flat upon its back, and leaping to a considerable height or distance ; from which peculiarity it derives its name.

out before him, the young Greek could scarcely withdraw his eyes from the glorious landscape ; his heart overflowed with happiness, and Nature seemed to sympathise in his joy ; while all around was so thoroughly in unison with the harmony and elasticity of his own feelings, that Maniolopolo did but scant justice to the meal, to which his companion was paying homage as devout as ever Ghebre lavished upon the sacred flame of his faith.

It was almost with regret that the young Greek once more rose from his fair and fragrant resting-place, and prepared to resume his journey. But the remembrance of the beautiful Carimfil pierced through the mists of memory like a bright star ; and as he vaulted into his saddle, and struck the sharp spur into the flank of his fleet-footed Arab, the name of his young love was on his lips, and hope again buoyant in his heart.

“ My lord loves this fair scene ; ” said Safi, as, after a brief space, the young lover once more checked his gallant horse, and gazed around him ; “ and in truth it looks as though Joy had built her nest among its branches, and Love

rocked her first-born on the river-blossoms : and yet, I have heard a darker tale told of as smiling a valley as this : a tale in which the muddy torrent of misery overflowed the bright plain of youth, and the rude hand of violence clasped the mantle of helplessness :—but, after all, what are these fables of past times ? are they not bosh—nothing."

" Nay, not so, Safi ; " replied Maniolo polo ; " there is much to be learnt from the legends of the massaldjhis, if we only read them aright. Tell me this tale as we ascend the mountain ; it will beguile the way."

The Tatar smiled ; and having flung the bridle on the neck of his steed, at once complied, with the air of one who feels that he is conferring a benefit.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TATAR'S TALE.

In the famous city of Schamachie, the capital of the province of Schirwan in Persia, lived a Merchant named Ali, who, from his immense wealth, was considered as a second Karoon.* He traded with the Franks in raw and wrought silks, and the wove cottons of the West ; with the Muscovite dealers in furs, leathers, and metals ; with the Tatars in horses ; and with the Jews—may their fathers' graves be defiled! — in gold and silver, brocades and weapons, woollen goods and tapestry : in short, there was no caravan passed in or out of the city in which the Merchant Ali had not a large venture ; and so favoured was he by the Prophet that he seemed

* The Croesus of the East.

to live only to prove the fallacy of the proverb, which says that, for every pearl of price that sees the sun, the diver must descend a score of times to the bottom of the ocean. Certain it is that, as often as he dipped his right hand into the bowl of fortune, he drew up the gem from the depth.

Moreover, the Merchant had a son — a youth of pride and promise ; and of a disposition so gentle that it seemed as though he had been nursed by the Peris, and fed with the honey-dew that the early bee rifies from the rose. Even as the azure veil of the firmament hides the ten thousand houris who live amid the sunbeams, so did his modesty conceal from all, save a chosen few, the divine perfections of his nature.

Mohammed, for that was his name, was one day walking in the pleasant and fertile environs of the city, musing over the ruined wall of the southern quarter which was demolished by Shah Abbas, and sighing in the gentleness of his spirit at the cruel effects of violence, when the slowly-sinking sun, pillowng its golden brow on its cushion of crimson and purple, warned him to

return to the house of his father in time for the evening meal.

As he passed slowly along one of the narrowest and least-frequented streets of the city, his ear was suddenly outraged by the voice of anguish ; and advancing anxiously in the quarter whence it came, he saw an old man of stern aspect, who, with ferocious gestures, was urging on the wali's guard to tear a young and beautiful female, whose veil had escaped in the struggle, from the arms of her aged parent, while she rent the vault of heaven with cries and supplications.

Mahammed sprang forward like the light-hoofed deer before the tread of the hunter, and at once inquired the cause of this iron-hearted violence ; as the maiden turned aside her graceful head with a blush which threw a new sunlight over her beauty.. The story was soon told. The father of the young houri was the debtor of the hoary sinner who stood by, enforcing this deed of darkness ; and his child was about to be torn from him, and sold into slavery, in default of other payment.

The voice of sorrow was soon turned into that of joy, and the happy father laid the forehead of thanksgiving in the dust of gratitude, as Mohammed, out of the abundance of his generosity, paid down the required sum, and freed the beautiful Zohara* from the grasp of her captor. But, alas ! the son of Hali had but transferred the chain of slavery to his own heart; and when, in obedience to the old man's prayer, he passed the threshold of the father of Zohara, and saw her mother weeping at his knees, while the maiden herself stood by in her young loveliness, partially shrouding her face in the folds of her robe, he felt that the sun and moon of his earthly sky would hereafter be the eyes of the fair creature whom he had rescued. It was true that at present the mists of sorrow obscured the sunbeams of beauty, but Zohara was like the water-lily which is ever the loveliest in its tears : and as the young man quitted the roof to which he had now restored happiness, he felt that an arrow was in his heart which he sought not to pluck out.

* Morning Star.

Mohammed had studied like a moullah in the colleges for which Schamachie has so long been famous, and the boasted sciences of the Franks were no more than atoms in the beams of his knowledge ; but from this time forth he sheathed the bright spear of study in the breast of indolence, and wandered during whole days beside the streams of the valley, or beneath the shadows of the forest-boughs, weaving sweet fancies of which the fair Zohara was ever the brilliant subject.

Such a passion as this could end only in marriage : and it was not long ere Mohammed, the son of the wealthy Hali, asked for his bride the daughter of the penniless Timsah, whose worldly possessions would not have loaded the weakest-backed camel in the city. It is not difficult to imagine how he was answered ; and while the mother of the young man was preparing to receive the wife of her son, he passed whole hours beside her, gazing on her fresh cheek, where nature had crushed its roses to paint the fairest skin that ever flushed at praise ; and into her deep eyes, where the light seemed

to slumber, save when his smile called it forth in living fire. Graceful was she as the safsaf, and fawn-like as the light-footed maidens of Singol ; while her voice was low and sweet as the night-wind among the tombs of the early dead.

Rèchid Aga was the friend of Mohammed ; they clung together like double pomegranates ; and, in the exuberance of his joy, the unwary young man poured into the ear of his chosen associate the tale of his approaching happiness. Rèchid listened, and a wild wish grew in his soul, and poisoned it like the breath of the upas. The painted wings of vanity were folded about his heart ; and, as he curled his dark and glossy beard over his fingers, he began to ask himself wherefore the felech of Mohammed had shed a light upon his path which had been denied to him ? If the maiden was so fair as the eyes of his friend had made her, she must be a banished peri, condemned to visit earth for a time, and to be won by a mortal—Why then should *he* not be that favoured one? And as Eblis thus prompted him, vague thoughts and hopes grew into shape and tangibility within his bosom ; and he re-

solved to learn all that the trusting friendship of Mohammed might lead him to reveal ; seizing, therefore, with the hand of sport, the skirts of confidence, he smilingly asked a thousand questions, to which his friend replied with unsuspecting frankness ; and thus the poverty of Timsah, and the obscurity of his position became known to him, as well as the beauty of Zohara, and the story of her rescue.

Rèchid Aga left the presence of his friend with treachery in his heart. His fancy had been taken captive by the glowing picture of this peerless beauty so soon to be a bride, and he resolved that should she be but half as lovely as she had been painted to him, she should be his, if craft or violence could win her.

As the steel-hearted leopard springs on the trembling chamois, so rushed the treacherous Aga on his prey ! The house of the slumbering Timsah was fired at midnight ; and the shrieking Zohara borne through the flames, only to be placed on a swift horse, encircled by the arm of its rider, and panting with affright.

As day dawned the horseman reined up his

rapid steed, and springing to the earth, drew after him his pale and sinking burthen.

It was a glorious morning ; and their halt was in a valley where happy hearts, blessed in each other, might have been content to dwell for ever. Much time was spent in restoring the maiden to consciousness, for her swoon was long and heavy ; and as Rèchid Aga hung over her, and bathed her pale brow with the pure water of a mountain stream, and crushed in her small hands the aromatic blossoms of the henna-plant, he felt that the words of Mohammed had been weak in painting her beauty. He had laid her down beneath the tall boughs of a maple tree, at whose roots the fresh moss grew rankly, clustered with deep-blue violets ; and when the fair Zohara at length opened her eyes, and beheld beside her the friend of her affianced husband, she clasped her hands in a transport of joy and gratitude ; for she guessed not that he had stained the skirts of his honour with the defilements of treachery, but at once believed that he had preserved her from the flames in friendship for Mohammed.

As the Aga caught her meaning, he eagerly encouraged the delusion ; and, spreading before her some dried fruits, with which he had come provided, he urged her to partake of them ere they pursued their way back to the city. The gentle Zohara, grateful for his care, smilingly obeyed ; and, as her false-hearted companion hastened to the stream to procure for her a draught of its refreshing water, she looked eagerly and admiringly about her, on the fair scene amid which she was seated.

The clouds, those graceful cup-bearers of the sky, were riding like snow-flakes upon the clear blue bosom of space ; on every side bloomed clusters of bright and many-tinted flowers, worthy to be the envy of the constellations ; the sun, a heaven-inspired painter ! had sketched a thousand beautiful designs on their leafy tablets ; and sweeter than the musk of Tartary was the perfume which accompanied his touch. The forest-boughs dropped honey, for the haunt of the wild-bee was among their leaves ; and the ruby cups of the bursting buds were each sealed with a diamond drop of dew. The distant mountains

bathed their brows in light; and the lesser heights were clothed in draperies of many coloured vegetation; the tall trees which overhung the stream looked like stately beauties mirroring their gracefulness in the clear waters; while the more flexible safsaf, the weeping willow, and the feathery birch, bent low into the wave, as though faint with enjoyment. The slender-hoofed hind at intervals bounded past, light as the wind that waved the branches; and the bulbul nestled amid the leaves above her head, and not yet weary of his melodious griefs, was pouring out a song to which the peris might have loved to listen.

As Zohara contemplated this fairy scene, her soul was steeped in the honey of delight; the thorns of care, and the gnawing caustic of sorrow, were alike shut out; and when the Aga held the cup to her lips, sparkling with the cold rock water, she thanked him with a smile which spread the glossy feathers of hope over the black heart of falsehood.

But ere long the serpent-tongue of guilt betrayed its worthless purpose; and the affrighted

maiden learnt the unholy passion which had caused her to be thus borne away from the roof of her father, with a terror which denied her utterance. The vows breathed by her perfidious suitor did but rouse hatred in her bosom ; and as she became more calm, she wedded the name of Rèchid Aga to every reproachful epithet with which her memory supplied her. She reminded him of the heavy chain of gratitude that had been flung around her by the generous aid of Mahammed, ere yet she had learnt to love him ; and she vowed by the soul of the prophet, and by the grave of her father, that she would rather die by her own hand, than be the wife of another. The protestations of the Aga fell on her ear like water upon sand, and left no impression ; while the young man gnashed the sharp teeth of disappointment against the shivered weapon of defeat, as, with her small dagger in her hand, which she had drawn from amid the folds of her girdle, she threatened to sheathe the steel of death in her heart, if he did not leave her on the instant.

The Aga urged and expostulated in vain.

He represented the impossibility of her return to the city, alone and unprotected; but the maiden spurned alike his threats and his entreaties; and she had raised her arm to strike, preferring death to further communion with her treacherous companion, when the tramp of horses was heard in the distance; and before Rèchid Aga could warn her of the probable danger, a wild shriek from Zohara summoned to their side a party of predatory Arabs.

The maiden had scarcely time to cover her face with her robe, when the foremost of the train checked his steed under the shadow of the tree beneath which she was sitting; while in the next instant the Aga, who had drawn his scymitar on the first alarm, was wounded, overpowered, and bound to one of its branches.

So unlooked-for a capture, almost in the vicinity of the city, was hailed with delight by the Arabs, whose chief immediately claimed the maiden as his spoil; and having looked upon her beauty, talked exultingly of the number of purses which would be freely paid down for so fair a purchase; while others appropriated the

horse and weapons of the Aga, the whole of which, as their practised glance at once detected, were of great value. Having satisfied themselves on this point, half a dozen of the most distinguished of the party seated themselves on the grass, and prepared to partake of the fruits which were still spread before the maiden ; while the rest, formed into separate groupes on the margin of the stream, drew from out of their travelling-bags their less delicate contents, and commenced a hurried meal.

Zohara, meanwhile, looked on tremblingly, and vague projects of escape rolled across her mind ; but, like wreaths of vapour they left nothing tangible behind ; and as she turned aside from her captors, and her eye fell on the drooping and wounded Aga, the origin of all her sufferings, her heart froze within her, and her pulses stood still, as though Azraël had pressed his finger upon her brow.

Coiled among the branches above her head, she beheld an enormous serpent, slowly moving along towards the bough to which the unhappy young man had been secured. The sunlight

fell flickering through the leaves, and touching at intervals the bright scales with which he was covered, turned them into jewels: his deep green eyes looked like emeralds, and his forked tongue protruded its poisoned lance from the blood-stained cavern of his yawning jaws. On, on he moved—and Zohara could not stir a limb, nor utter a cry for help—on, on, until his head rested on the shoulder of the wounded man, and his gleaming folds were coiled around his body. Here for awhile he remained, as though contemplating the scene beneath; and then gliding away into the thick foliage as noiselessly as he had stolen forth, he disappeared among the leaves.

Again Zohara breathed freely; and she would have warned her captors of the vicinity of their dangerous enemy, and besought of them to rescue the insensible Aga from so horrible a death; but at this moment, the Arabs, having drunk too deeply from their wine-skins, began to wrangle among themselves, and never ceased their dispute until the slumber of inebriety stole upon them, when, one by one, they laid their heads upon the earth, and slept.

Now indeed the maiden began to let the wings of hope flutter about her heart ; but she yet felt the necessity of caution, for although the groupes by the river bank followed the example of their chiefs, and flung themselves into the attitude of repose, she knew that their's would be but the lighter slumbers of fatigue, which an unguarded movement might serve to dissipate. While, therefore, she was carefully turning in her mind the most feasible means of success, her thoughts divided between her terror of the serpent, and her hope of escape from her enemies ; the mighty snake once more appeared above her head, and as her eye again rested upon it, she crouched down with clasped hands and clenched teeth, without power to withdraw herself from the danger.

The serpent, however, glided down the tree, and passed her by unheeded, attracted by the scent of the wine-skins which yet lay beside the sleeping Arabs. Twice, thrice, he reared his crested head high above them ; and then plunging it into the liquid, he drank deep, and flung back into the wine a few heavy black drops of the foul poison which hung about his jaws.

The noise of his retreat, as he again glided swiftly into the underwood with a rattling sound, accompanied by a shrill hissing noise, aroused the Arabs, who started from the earth, and clutched their weapons ; but when on looking around they could discover no cause of alarm, and saw one pale captive seated beneath the tree, and the other yet bound to its branches, they only muttered an imprecation ; and seizing the skins of wine, passed them one to the other, and resumed their rest.

Now was the moment come when Zohara felt within her the courage which grows out of peril. She glided to the side of the Aga, but he did not unclose his eyes—she touched his hand, it was cold and nerveless—and the maiden started with a new terror, for she felt that she looked on death.

A sudden impulse shook her, and she drew forth her dagger. Were not they who were sleeping but a few paces off, her enemies ? and might she not deliver herself from their grasp ? Those at her feet could injure her no further, for she knew that they had quaffed poison with

their last draught—She moved towards the margin of the stream, but her heart grew sick ; she felt that, if when the sword is in the hand of power, generosity is the scabbard of heroes, so much more should mercy be that of woman !

The steed of the Aga was standing, fastened to a mimosa bush, not fifty paces from her ; and with the speed of lightning she disengaged the bridle, and sprang upon his back ; but ere she could commence her flight, a second trampling of horses sounded through the valley, and at once the sleeping Arabs vaulted into their saddles, and, shouting to their chiefs, prepared to meet the coming enemy. But their chiefs answered not ; they lay prone and motionless upon the earth, their faces blackening in the wind, and the poison oozing from their parted lips : and the wondering tribe were yet busied in endeavouring to awaken them, when a band of horsemen, led by Mohammed the son of Hali, came like a thunder-cloud across the valley, sweeping down all before them.

Zohara was saved ! The “Morning-Star” once more lit up the sky of Mohammed’s happy-

ness ; and the dark-hearted Aga paid the forfeit of his treachery.— But here we are on the mountain brow, Effendim ; and, with the help of the prophet, we should be past the dark ridge which cuts against the clouds yonder, before sun-set ; so we have little time to waste.” And as Safii ceased speaking he gave his good horse the rein, and, followed by Maniopololo, was soon descending into the valley.

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON :

P. SHOBERL, JUN., 51, RUPERT STREET, HAYMARKET.

THE
ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

BY

MISS PARDOE,

AUTHOR OF "THE CITY OF THE SULTAN,"
"THE RIVER AND THE DESART," &c.

"Mid many things most new to ear and eye,
The pilgrim rested here his weary feet,
And gazed around on Moslem luxury."

BYRON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1839.

LONDON:
P. SHOBERY, JUN., 51, RUPERT-STREET, HAYMARKET.

CONTENTS
OF
THE SECOND VOLUME.

	PAGE
Part the First	1
The Arab Steed	18
Part the Second	212
The Last of the Janissaries	221

THE
ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

“ *Né oldou*—what has happened ?” demanded Saïfula Pasha, as his chibouque-bashi handed to him his fourth pipe, while the Cadi of the town was devoutly kissing the hem of his robe ; “ If my head were as large as the mountain of El Caf, which surrounds the habitable globe, it would scarcely suffice for all its duties ; and if my arm were long enough to reach from Stam-boul to Scanderia, it would still be too short to grasp all that it is required to hold. But speak, Cadi Almadhafer --- what has happened in the city ?”

" May the condescension of my lord increase!" said the justice, as he lifted his head from the earth, and obeying a motion of the Pasha's hand, assumed a sitting posture; " believe that the Ibn Sheitan — the son of Satan — has arrived among us."

" Min Allah — Heaven forbid !" ejaculated the Satrap, flinging out a long thread of smoke. " And yet," he added with a faint smile, as he looked down upon the pumpkin-headed, unwieldy little coward at his feet; " You are a wise man, Cadi Almadhafer, and moreover a lawyer — you are, therefore, fully competent to form a judgment on such a point. And how comes he to our quiet province? Is he a saksiz — a no-beard, like the natives of Frangistan, or is he in the true likeness of Eblis, horned and tailed? Speak, good Cadi, — Mashallah! listen."

" May my lord's lip never want a jest ! " was the reply: " but truly this is no theme for me to comment. The baseborn stranger, who is now brawling under the very palace-walls of your Excellency, is, as I hear, (for I have never

looked upon him myself,) handsome enough to be the high priest of Anirān.* He walks the bazar like my lord himself — flings his piastres from him as freely as a padishah — feeds all the ragged pezevenks † in the city—and has given to a black-eyed almè ‡ a cachemire rich enough for a Vèzir's harem.” And as he concluded this catalogue of vices, the corpulent Cadi paused for breath.

“ Chok chay—that is much;” said the Pasha complacently: “ he will leave money in the city.”

“ I sent to his house,” pursued the Cadi, “ to learn who he was, and whence he came, as is my wont with all strangers; and his reply was this —‘ Tell him who sent you, Yuzbashi’—for to do him honour I intrusted the inquiry to the captain of your Excellency’s guard—‘ that, when I put my beard into his hand, he shall be free to pluck it out’ — and so he turned upon his heel, and left the chamber.”

“ Almadhafer,” said the Pasha, “ you are an ass”—and, having delivered himself of this opi-

* Hymen.

† Rascals.

‡ Dancing girl.

nion, he smoked on for a time in silence. “Have you never heard, Effendim ;” he resumed at length, for the Cadi had not ventured to controvert the assertion of his superior ; “have you never heard that the spur is for the steed, the koorbash for the buffalo, the capidgi-bashi for the traitor, and the hand-mirror for the young beauty ? Cadi Almadhafer, do you mean to be a dog all your days ?”

To which question the obsequious judge only replied by an emphatic “Min Allah — Heaven forbid !”

“ Listen to me then ;” said the Satrap ; “ let this giddy-brained stranger alone ; send no messenger to his house, ask no questions of himself —it is unseemly : but, Cadi—fold your feet upon the carpet of watchfulness ; if his servants love rakèe, let it be poured into their cups—the fiery sherbet of the Franks unlocks the lips of all men, and lays their hearts upon your hands where you may read them at your leisure—Let him give his feasts in peace, but be careful that some of your own spies sit down to every repast — let him be fooled and flattered, and made

merry with songs and dances ; and he will surely fall into our power by some act of inadvertence, which he will be glad to buy off with gold. Shekiur Allah ! we wish him no harm ; and we have need just now of such as can pay their avanias* with an open hand !”

“ Sen bilirsen — you know best ; ” said the obedient Cadi, whose disappointment at the calmness with which the Satrap received his intelligence of the arrival of a wealthy stranger at the quiet city of the pashalik was beyond his power of concealment : “ Inshallah ! my lord knows best—bakalum—we shall see.”

The hour at which the Satrap was accustomed to give audience had arrived ; and the Cadi, having once more attempted to kiss the extremity of his garment, and being condescendingly prevented from so doing, passed at once from the presence of the Pasha ; who followed slowly, supported on either side by a chaoush,† who held him up under the arms, as though he had been a cripple, as is usual with all high personages in the East ; to whom locomotion, on

* Fines.

† Officer.

occasions of solemnity, is apparently supposed to be considered peculiarly injurious. The great man was followed by two chokhadars, or cloak bearers, his keeper of the purse, his chibouque-bashi, his *cafejhe-bashi*, and four soldiers of his guard.

As he made his way across the wide hall of audience to the divan at the upper end, all the applicants who thronged the doorway prostrated themselves to the earth, while the officers and individuals of sufficient rank to approach him person, bent down, and laid his hand upon their heads.

“ Alhemdullilah ! — all are sure of justice while Saifula Pasha is Satrap of the province ; ” commenced the Pasha himself, as he took his gorgeous pipe, with its pale lemon-coloured amber mouth-piece, enamelled with blue and gold, from his chibouque-bashi ; while a second attendant slid a small brazen dish under the boudaka ;* “ Who has anything to ask from the favourite of the Padishah, the Light of the Earth, and the Lord of the Three Seas ? — Let him speak—I listen.”

* Pipe-bowl.

The words were yet upon his lips when an aged Jew detached himself from the crowd at the bottom of the hall, and, sinking upon his knees, made his way thus to the centre of the floor, where he flung himself with his face upon the earth. The appearance of the grey-bearded Hebrew was by no means calculated to prejudice the spectators in his favour ; his turban was of coarse cotton, of which the original colour had long been a mystery ; his brow was deeply and closely wrinkled, his quick restless eyes were partially hidden by a pair of thick and wiry eyebrows, his prominent nose was pinched and sharp, and his thin lips were pressed closely together, as though he could not part gratuitously even with his breath, without an effort to retain it. His grizzled beard hung to his girdle, which was of black woollen, and bound above an outer dress of blue and white cotton, much worn and discoloured ; his feet were bare, for the ragged papoushes which he had left at the door had been their only covering ; and altogether Jacob the Jew was as unprepossessing an individual as could well have been selected to open the divan.

8 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

But, ungainly as he was, he was not unknown to the Pasha, who stroked down his beard, as he saw the Hebrew perform his prostration ; and exclaimed, without removing the chibouque from his lips :—

“ Khosh geldin—you are welcome, Yacob : it is some time since we have seen you here. How are your affairs, Hebrew ? Is your gold in bars, or in coin ? and do you come to make us your treasurers, lest the metal should not be secure under your own roof ?”

“ Heaven help me ! Should I venture to trouble my lord if it were thus ? Ai, ai — alas ! alas !—I come to the mirror of justice only when I am wronged, that the light of my lord’s countenance may be turned upon me, and the tears may be dried in my aged eyes — I am here to put up a complaint against my neighbour Stephanaki the serudjhe,* who has defrauded me of my just rights.”

“ Stephanaki,” shouted a chaoush close beside the Satrap ; “ come forth, and kneel in the shadow of my lord the Pasha, whose attribute is justice.”

* Horse Keeper.

The call was instantly obeyed, and a fine-looking young Greek, wearing the picturesque and becoming costume of the islands, knelt beside his accuser. Stephanaki was in the first bloom of manhood, with a laughing eye, and a sunshiny expression of countenance, which even the dread presence of the Pasha could not wholly overcloud.

“ Mashallah !” murmured the Satrap to the khoja or secretary who was squatted at his feet, with his ink-bottle in his girdle, and a huge strip of parchment resting upon his knee ready to be made use of, while he dipped his calam or reed-pen into the ink in order to commence his duties: “ Mashallah ! this is as it should be ; a dervish against a woman, and a Greek against a Jew — Bakalum—we shall see.”

A motion of the Pasha’s hand intimated to Yacob that he was to speak : and he at once commenced his complaint.

“ Is not my lord as one who has sat on the right hand of the Padishah, and whose mouth has been filled with the gold of truth ? In my soreness of spirit I said — ‘ I will away to the

giver of health, the promoter of joy, the great and just Saïfula Pasha, for does he not hold the reins of life and death? and is he not like the sun at noonday, without which the earth would be dark?"

"Taib!—well said, Jew;" nodded the Satrap, as he toyed with his perfumed beard; and there was a sudden chorus of voices in the apartment, all murmuring "Taib! taib!"

"At the last mahāk,"* pursued the Jew, in the same humble and submissive tone, and without suffering the slightest token of elation to escape him at the approbation which his words had elicited, "came Stephanaki to my poor hut to purchase dhourra;† I was at meat, and I bade him rest awhile until my meal was finished, when I would wash, and come forth to the store-house wherein I had housed the grain; but he pleaded haste, and thus I was obliged to leave the food almost untasted, lest he should go elsewhere, which might have been inconvenient to the poor youth."

"Had you not done better to have asked him to share it with you?" demanded the Pasha.

* Decline of the moon.

† Indian corn.

“ Now, by our father Abraham !” exclaimed the shrinking Israelite : “ would my lord desire me to eat with a Christian ? to sit at table with a filthy Greek ?”

“ True : ” said the Pasha with a quiet smile ; “ I had forgotten that the two infidel drinkers of wine, the Tchifout* and the Giaour, were unclean even to each other ! Allah kerîm !—On with your tale, Hebrew.”

“ We were long ere we concluded the bargain ; ” continued Yacob ; “ and I finished by selling my grain some piastres too cheap——”

“ But he *did* buy of you at last ; say you not so ? ” demanded the Satrap.

“ He did ; ” replied the Jew ; “ but he should have paid me at the very least——”

“ Khoja ; ” said the Pasha, slowly removing the chibouque from his mouth, and looking towards the secretary ; “ write that Yacob the Jew shall, before sunset, pay an avania to the Pasha of one hundred piastres, for selling dhourra within the walls of the city, without authority — now, Hebrew, once more we listen.”

* Jew.

12 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

But if the Jew had successfully concealed his triumph when he was environed by plaudits, he was by no means so fortunate when he found himself betrayed by his own folly ; he plucked his beard until the hairs remained in his grasp, he thrust his turban awry, and wrung his hands as though he were ruined for ever. His paroxysm gave the Pasha time to reflect ; and that he had done so, he very soon gave proof, by again addressing the scribe. “ Write, likewise, that Stephanaki the Greek raïah shall also pay to the Pasha, by the same period, his avania of fifty piastres, for having purchased within the city walls certain bags of dhourra from a cheater of the revenue.”

The khoja was just about to record this second reflection of the mirror of justice, when the Greek, prostrating himself in the most approved manner, exclaimed ; “ The words of my lord the Pasha are as the diamonds of Samarcand flung forth upon the path of life. Surely my lord will suffer even a vassal to gather up some of these precious jewels, and to examine their lustre. It is true, oh, Light of the World ! that I pur-

chased the dhourra of this rascally Tchifout ; but I made him deliver it to me on the meidan* beyond the city gates. He is indeed guilty, and deserves the fine which your highness has in mercy made very disproportionate to the crime ; but I have committed no offence, as my lord will learn, when the kiupek — the cur, has told his tale."

" Kiupek in your teeth, dog of a giaoour !" retorted the enraged Jew, glad to have secured an object on which to vent his wrath, without danger to the soles of his feet ; " Who are you that you should fling dirt upon my head ? What are you but a Greek ? Are you not a raïah like myself ? and are you not, moreover, like the rest of your degraded race, a liar and a cheat ?—haivan der—you are an animal."

" Ajaib—wonderful !" ejaculated the Pasha ; " Yacob has found his tongue, and is now head-brawler of the city ! Peace, I say, old man. Is the divan become a Theriaki-tcharchi,† or a

* Plain.

† Resort for opium-eaters, where night-brawls and heavy blows are frequent.

14 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

Timerhazè,* that I am to have my ears rent by your clamour? Take care of your own; and meanwhile, I have heard enough. Stephanaki, you have gained your cause. I am satisfied that you are a bash-pezevenk — a great rogue; for, although every Roumi† rascal can talk of the deeds of his ancestors, Mashallah! there are few among you who dare venture to speak of his own. Nevertheless, I say, your cause is gained, for you have kept your temper, and the Jew has lost his; by which I know that he is in the wrong. Write, khoja, that the Hebrew Yacob is fined fifty piastres for bringing before the Divan a cause which he could not support."

And while the unhappy Israelite was once more giving way to a burst of grief, the mirror of justice murmured to the Cadi, who was seated near him; "The rascally Jew can well afford to pay his avania; but I question if the gidi mascara—the young scaramouch, in the embroidered leggings, does not carry all his piastres on his back."

To which sagacious deduction, the Cadi re-

* Lunatic Asylum.

† Greek.

plied by his usual “Taib—excellent! my lord sees through the darkness of midnight—who shall dispute his wisdom?” But as he again settled himself upon his carpet, he muttered between his closed teeth: “Curse on the unbelieving Jew! he should have preferred his complaint to me—I would not have mulcted him in more than a hundred piastres in all; and moreover, he should have gained his cause.

The next applicant was a woman, who, taking off her slipper, turned the sole upwards, and demanded justice on her husband, who had put her forth from his harem, and refused to allow her a decent maintenance in the house of her father.

As her own statement went to show that she was neither young nor pretty, and that she had moreover led the unhappy man a life which had by no means tended to increase his attachment to this world, her case was soon dismissed; and she was fined twenty piastres for vague and frivolous accusations against a good Moslem, who had been careful, before the divan sat that morning, to forward to the Satrap a packet

16 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

of rare and costly gebeli,* whose aroma was actually escaping from the chibouque of the Pasha, while he listened to the tale of the wife.

In this instance, as the virtuous wrath of the Satrap was more than commonly excited, he ordained that the fine should be paid before the complainant left the court; and remarked, moreover, that if any rumour reached him of a new application of the slipper of the miserable woman before him to the ears of her husband or his young wife, the consequences would be serious; after which, he declared himself exhausted; and, deputing the Cadi to the seat of justice, retired from the sight of the crowd of applicants who still thronged the hall of audience; and, supported by his attendants, withdrew slowly and gravely to the women's apartments, to forget in the society of the beautiful Carimfil and her Greek friend the toils of the morning.

Coffee and sweetmeats were served when he had taken up his position on the sofa, and received the salutations and condolences of his companions; after which Katinka sang to her

* Tobacco.

zebec, until the Satrap gave a few indications of drowsiness, by no means flattering to her minstrelsy ; when, anxious that he should not have cause to complain of ennui while she possessed the means of diverting his idleness, she laid aside her instrument and exclaimed suddenly : “ Let not my lord’s eyes close before he has heard the tale which I have been pondering for his amusement. It may be that it will possess the power of relieving his spirit from the fatigues of the divan and the affairs of the city.” And, as the Pasha smiled his assent, she at once commenced the narrative of :—

CHAPTER II.

THE ARAB STEED.

Ildji Rezà was the son of a rich merchant of Damascus ; and, being the only child of his father, to whose prayers the prophet had long been deaf, by refusing to his wives the honour and advantage of giving him an heir to his immense wealth, the boy necessarily became the pet and plaything of the salemiek, and the idol of the whole harem.

His beautiful Georgian mother, proud of the supremacy which the birth of her son gave her over the mind of her husband, grew haughty and imperious ; and the Buyûk Hanoum of Yezid, (for so was the Merchant called) who had been the daughter of a distinguished Emir,

retired in disgust to her father's house, and refused to return beneath the roof of her husband, however great the instances which he made to reclaim her.

The secession of the principal lady of the Merchant's establishment left the Georgian mother supreme mistress of the harem ; and the fact of this ascendancy, derived from her son, only produced still greater and more ill-judged indulgence towards the boy himself : every whim however senseless, every caprice however extravagant, was not only indulged, but applauded ; and he accordingly grew up a perfect imp of Eblis, both in beauty and mischief.

I say in beauty ; for the experience of every day tends to convince us that the popular prejudice which peoples Jehanum with ghouls and afrits, is as false as that the tattered cloak of a Dervish always covers a saint. More than half the evil which is wrought upon earth is the work of individuals whose beards are glossy and well-combed, and whose turbans are seated upon brows as smooth as the Prophet's palm ; and he who asserts to the contrary eats dirt, or has

walked from Stamboul to Mecca with his fingers in his eyes, and the skirts of his robe defiled by the abomination of ignorance.

With regard to his other attribute of mischief, I believe no one ever denied *that* to be the son of a burnt father, so I shall not insist on the propriety of my description.

Had Yezid been as rich as King Karoon, the youngster grew up in a spirit well calculated to decrease his wealth. The hours which his father believed to be spent in study in the medresh of the Mosque of Sultan Daoud, were passed among the most profligate of the youth of the city; and as all the slaves found it to their advantage to be silent—for Ildji Rezà was as generous as he was profuse—and as the worthy Merchant was descending the hill of life, and greasing the beard of years with the pillauf of dotage, he pursued his career unfettered; while such was the fascination of his beauty, and the influence of his mother, that there was not a woman in the harem of Yezid the Khawaji,* who would not have sold her jewels to minister to his caprices.

* Merchant.

But the most serious extravagance was yet to come. Suddenly there appeared in the city a dealer in horses, who brought with him animals of such surpassing beauty, that all the young men of Damascus who had ever tugged at any thing more exciting than a mahar * well nigh lost their wits. Day by day the dealer and his horses traversed the principal streets of the city; and so beautiful were many of these creatures, that more than one harem-lattice was thrown back further than it should have been, either in admiration of the glorious animals, or of the gallant young Effendis who followed in their wake. The dealer was a shrewd man: he had gathered up his feet on the mat of calculation, and spiced his sherbet with avarice: he was the very Khawaji to bring his beasts to a good market; but for a few days he affected unwillingness to part from them—he loved them as his life—called them janum, guzum—my love, my eyes, my soul — feigned to whisper flatteries in their ears, while by some subtle art he taught them to look as though they comprehended and

* Camel's bridle.

appreciated his gentleness ; and showed so much love for his already tempting merchandise, that every person who had gold to lavish on a whim, was convinced that never horses were worth so many purses as the horses of Ali the Toorkoman.

When he at length suffered himself to be prevailed on to exchange them for piastres, it need not be told that they were counted up to a good sum : and many times had Ildji Rezà been among the bidders for the different animals which were paraded one by one through the great thoroughfares of the city ; but on each occasion the Toorkoman had set him aside with a low “ Yavash, yavash — softly, softly — your time is not yet come. The camel who holds his head high is guided by the ass that leads the string ; so let my lord be led in this matter by his slave ; and, folding the skirts of patience under the feet of reason, wait yet awhile until the bit is in the mouth of the beast which is alone worthy to bear him.”

Perplexed as he was by this unaccountable conduct on the part of the Merchant, Ildji Rezà

complied in silence; but when a score of noble horses, each more beautiful than the last, had found owners among the young gallants of Damascus, the Toorkoman disappeared, much to the chagrin of the son of Yezid, who daily saw his associates galloping along upon animals to which his own, which had nevertheless been purchased at a heavy price, and given to him by his father, was but as a buffalo.

So jaundiced, indeed, was his spirit, by this unlooked-for disappointment, that ever, as his acquaintances greeted him, he seemed to see the laughter of mockery in their smile; and when they jested with him on his delay, or condoled with him on his annoyance, he felt that they were now revenging themselves for a host of petty mortifications entailed on them by his uncalculating profusion.

The young man's heart burnt within his bosom, and he well nigh fell sick with vexation; when one day, as he was walking moodily along, he was overtaken near the eastern gate of the city by a bectachy, or mountain-dervish, who saluted him as he passed with a courteous

greeting which broke in upon his reverie ; and, raising his head to reply to the salutation, Ildji Reza on his side was at once attracted by the tone and look of the devotee.

He appeared to be about sixty years of age, but time had neither furrowed his brow, thinned his cheek, nor dimmed the lustre of his large clear grey eye. His glance was keen, fiery, and searching : his step firm and assured ; and his voice as full and melodious as though he were yet a stripling. He wore a tunic and khirkheh, or cloak of camel's hair, girt about his waist with a leathern girdle, over which flowed his snow-white beard ; while a conical cap edged with fur, crimson papooshes, and a prayer chaplet hung round his neck, completed his costume, and proclaimed his sanctity.

" 'Tis a fair day, father ; " said the young man respectfully ; " are you long from the mountains ? "

" I travelled to the city, my son ; " replied the dervish ; " some twelve weeks back, in company with a Toorkoman Arab, who sought to dispose of a string of horses ; and when I

parted from him at the khan where he had taken up his abode, I hastened to the dwelling of a kinsman, beside whose bed stood Azrael and his attendant spirits: there did I watch and pray until yesterday: and I am now on my way home, praising the power which has removed a sufferer from a world of care and misery."

"Can you really rejoice that the wings of death have folded themselves about the soul of one whose blood leaps in your own veins? and that a warm and sentient spirit is now dark in the darkness of the tomb?"

"And why not?" asked the dervish; "Do we show our love for our dear ones, by wishing to protract their period of wretchedness? Evallah! I trust that no fond heart will put up such a prayer for me."

"Did you not tell me, father, that you travelled to Damascus in company with a kiupek — a dog of a horse-dealer, who lately traded in the city?" asked the young man, for whom so melancholy a discourse possessed no attraction; and who suddenly conceived a hope that, through the medium of this holy man, he might obtain

some information, enabling him to discover the abode of the Toorkoman ; “ know you what has since become of him ? and where he is now ? throwing dirt on the beards of true believers ? ”

“ Ne bilirim — what can I say ? ” replied the bectachy : — “ Have I not told you that I have been the tenant of a sick room, whence the world is ever shut out ? How, then, can I give you tidings of the bazar, or of the merchants who frequent it ? ”

As he spoke, the clatter of horses’ hoofs sounded in the distance ; and soon a horseman appeared mounted on a coal-black steed of surpassing incomparable symmetry and beauty, that even the bectachy, unused as he might be supposed to be to feel any interest in so purely worldly object, uttered an exclamation of astonishment, and stroked down his white beard with “ Ajaib ! ” as fervent as it was prolonged.

If the Dervish were thus affected by the appearance of the animal, it may be imagined that Ildji Rezà was transfixed : and as the rider flew past him, seeming to be traversing the world on the wings of the wind, or mounted on one of the

flying horses of Peristan, he almost shouted in the excess of his rapture.

“ Wallah billah—by the Prophet ! to be the owner of that steed, I would —.”

“ What would you do, my son ?” asked the bectachy.

“ Any thing that may be lawful for a good Musselmaun ;” was the reply : and Ildji Rezà heard, or fancied he heard, a low chuckle which came unpleasantly to his ear ; “ Long have I coveted a steed which should have no peer. Alhemdullilah — praise be to Allah ! here he comes again !”

And it was so : the horseman had returned upon his path ; and, diverging to the right and left, and vaulting his high-blooded Arab over every impediment, he at length checked him close beside the young man and the dervish, with a suddenness that brought the fiery animal on his haunches, while the smoke issued from his transparent nostrils, and the foam flew from his mouth.

“ Khosh buldûk — well found !” shouted the rider, whom Ildji Rezà at once recognized as the

Toorkoman dealer ; " How says my lord now ? Did I not well to hold back his hand until I brought to Damascus a horse such as had never yet been seen in the city streets ?—Yavash, yavash—quiet, quiet, Thunderbolt :" he added, addressing the animal, who was impatiently pawing the earth with his small hoof : " see you not that I would talk with the beyzadeh ?" * and the creature quailed beneath the rebuke, and stood like a statue hewn in black marble beside the path.

" What means this, khawaji ?" exclaimed the young man eagerly ; " Whence are you ? and why have you been so long absent from Damascus ? How many purses do you demand for this brave beast ? And how became you possessed of an animal worthy to have carried the Prophet ?"

" Chok chay — that is much ;" smiled the Arab ; " but I will answer my lord as I best may. It means that I have brought for him the horse of which he alone should be the owner — I am even now from the desart — I have de-

* Son of a lord.

layed my return until I deemed the animal matchless alike in speed and docility — I demand for my merchandise a price which must be paid ere I consent to make him the property of another— and I have possessed him since he sported a graceful foal beside his mother, in a green oasis, near which we had pitched our tents. Is my lord answered?"

Ildji Rezà smiled in his turn ; " Ai, mascara-scaramouch !" he said gaily : " for the last moon I have been smoking the chibouque of bitterness, for I believed that you had cast ashes upon my beard ; and not a moment ago I asked tidings of you from this holy man, who travelled with you many weeks back, from the mountains !"

" Khosh buldûk, father :" said the Toorkoman, looking for the first time towards the dervish : " I must have eaten dirt that I did not see you when I first stopped beside the Effendi. Down, Thunderbolt, and make your salâm to the holy man." And the obedient animal once more obeyed by sinking gently upon his knees, and laying his nose in the dust.

" Mashallah ! 'tis a beast which might well shame many a True Believer ;" said Ildji Rezà ;

"Bashustun — on my head be it—the horse is mine."

"Are the coffers of Yezid Effendi well filled?" laughed the Toorkoman; "My lord has not yet learnt that the piety of a dervish and the qualities of a horse should never be taken upon trust."

"Nay, Khawaji, you are uncivil;" said the young man: "but our good father must pardon you, for you have not folded your feet upon the cushion of caution; nor have you made slaves of your words. You should have more reverence for the khirkheh!"

"Heed him not, Effendimou — my master;" interposed the bectachy: "his calling is one of light mood and free speech, and he means me no evil — his words are like the sands of the desart, they pass by, and no man inquires whence they come."

"W'Allah — by Allah! 'tis well put;" exclaimed the Toorkoman: "when the boudaka is full, I smoke it; but when once the ashes are knocked out, I forget the flavour of the gebeli. Phrases savouring of the sosun* and the ban-

* White lily.

nuffshah * are for the use of the harem : they are not for the wandering merchant, whose medresch † is the way-side."

"They fail you not, however, Khawaji ;" said Ildji Rezà, as he hung over the coal-black Arab, and passed portions of its flowing and silky mane through his fingers, as though they had been the love-locks of a young beauty ; "But we wander from our purpose : tell me the price of this wind-winged steed, that I may count you the purses, and make it mine."

"Listen to me, Effendim ;" said the Toorkoman emphatically ; "this animal has been to me as a child — it has shared alike my tent and my repast ; my voice has become music in its ears, and my will the impulse of its being. I cannot sell it for gold — all the purses of all the padishahs of the East should not buy it — I will only part from it to secure what is yet more dear to me."

"And what, in the name of the Prophet, may that be ?" asked the young man in some surprise ; "Can there be aught on earth that a man whose

* Violet.

† College.

beard is black, would value beyond an animal like this? Affiet ollah — much good may it do you. If it be in my possession, or in that of Yezid my father, it is your's."

" Taib—well said !" exclaimed the bectachy : " the words of the beyzadeh are precious as the gems of Araby—he wastes them not idly."

" Will you swear this ?" asked the Khawaji calmly.

Ildji Rezà hesitated for a moment : and then, glancing at the dervish, and perceiving that he was looking towards him with a placid smile, he answered boldly ; " That will I, by the soul of the Prophet !"

" Nay, we will not make the Prophet a party in the compact ;" said the Toorkoman ; " swear by your own hopes of Paradise, and by the beard of your father, and I am satisfied."

" Chok chay—that is much ;" said the young man ; " but so be it. May the houris never receive me into Paradise, and may the beard of my father be eternally defiled, if I fail you."

" Taib ! taib ! I say again ;" exclaimed the dervish ; " I love the daring of a free spirit ;

and now, Khawaji, to your share of the contract — as I have accidentally been a witness to the bargain, I will not proceed on my way until I see the bridle of the animal in the hand of the beyzadeh."

"The horse is his, father :" said the Toorkoman readily ; "I am willing to fulfil the pledge that I have given ;" and he placed the rein of the coveted steed in the grasp of Ildji Rezà ; who, bewildered with delight, would have vaulted into the saddle and galloped off, had not the Khawaji laid his hand upon his arm, and detained him.

"My lord is as yet but my mir akhor ;"** he said, with a smile which almost withered into a sneer : "I have satisfied him ; but he has, as yet, given me naught save promises, strengthened, however, by a vow which he dare not violate. It is now his turn. My demand will neither exhaust the coffers of the worthy merchant his father, nor cost himself a piastre. During my sojourn in Damascus, I chanced — it avails not how — to look into the bright eyes

* Chief of the Stables.

of the daughter of Kassim Bey — the peerless Delsaïsè Hanoum. Nay, turn not on me with that withering frown, Effendim ; the heart of the maiden is as pure as the waters of the fountain in which she was laughingly contemplating her own beauty when she knew not that any gaze was on her. From that hour I loved her—in that hour I strove to win her—But how ? As I wandered gloomily through an obscure street, I followed unobserved two portly Effendis, who were evidently on their way from some coffee-kiosque to their own dwellings. Twilight had fallen upon the city, and they believed themselves unobserved, and thus, as they moved slowly along, they threw their words out right and left, as the mimosa bush throws out its thorns. They were the Merchant Yezid, and his powerful friend Kassim Bey : and then and there I learnt that the beautiful and gazelle-eyed Delsaïsè was the promised bride of the Khawaji's only son. Does my lord read the writing on the parchment?"

" You would have the maiden for your wife is it not so ?" asked Ildji Rezà.

The Toorkoman nodded assent.

“ If that be all;” laughed the young man ; “ bir chey yok — it is nothing. If you can win her father to consent, let her be your’s ; I am no woman-wooer, and I have renounced my claim. I would rather have this peerless Arab in my stable, than the fairest maiden of Damascus in my harem.”

“ Pek ahi—it is well ;” retorted the Toorkoman ; “ but that is not enough. Shall I strew dirt upon my head, by asking the daughter of a Bey for my wife ? Shall I expose myself to the gibes and jeers of every idler like a spinning Santon, by telling my condition and the wild object of my desires ? I will eat sour pillauf with no man. You must become for once an earnest lover ; you must repent your first decision ; and not content with waiting the pleasure of a capricious mistress, and a cautious father, you must put every art in practice to win the young beauty *ere the next moon wanes* ; and, having won her, you must instantly mount your trusty steed, and enveloping the maiden in her mantle, and placing her before you, leave the city by the southern gate ; and never draw your rein until

36 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

you arrive under the shadow of the rock-seated tower* which overhangs the river. I will be within the walls awaiting you ; and there I will relieve you of your burthen. Will you again swear ? ”

And once more the infatuated Ildji Rezà, driven to destruction by his felech, answered gaily and readily ; “ I will.”

Little more passed that day. The son of Yezid uttered a hasty parting salutation to the Khawaji and the Dervish, who remained together ; and springing upon the noble Arab, sped, like an arrow shot by a strong arm, towards the city ; while the clatter of his horse’s hoofs drowned the laughter which followed him upon the wind.

* On the south-westerly side of the city, a small building is erected on the crest of a steep precipice, beneath which flows the Barrady.

CHAPTER III.

THE ARAB STEED — *continued.*

GREAT was the exultation of the young man when he remarked that every eye was turned upon his steed as he hurried along. In the pride of his spirit he committed a thousand extravagancies, and drew upon himself the gaze and the envy of the whole city. He passed not the habitation of one of his acquaintance without indulging his fiery horse in as many caprices and carakolets as brought all the fair inhabitants of the harem to their lattices ; and it was not until he reached his father's house, and with his usual impetuosity was himself providing for the comfort of his new acquisition, that his thoughts re-

curred to the singular contract into which he had so recklessly entered ; and then the difficulties that opposed themselves on all sides at once flashed upon him. But it was now too late to retract ; he was fettered by a vow ; and he had no alternative but to breast the stream as best he might.

When he entered the house, he accordingly shut himself into his apartment to ruminate over the most feasible method of commencing his operations ; and after mature deliberation, over what approached as near to it as Ildji Rezà was able to bestow on any subject, he left his chamber, and joined Yezid the merchant, in his own room, where he was quietly smoking his chin-bouque on a corner of the sofa.

“ Salām Aleikum ;” said the son, as he passed the threshold with a respectful salutation.

“ Aleikum Salām ;” replied the Merchant without withdrawing the pipe from his mouth “ you are early from the coffee-kiosque this evening, Ildji Rezà ; whither are you now bound ? ”

“ I would ask to share your sofa, Effendim,

if your thoughts are not so differently engaged
that my words will sound harshly to your ears."

The delighted Yezid stroked down his beard with a happy smile, as he summoned a slave with a chibouque for his unexpected guest; marvelling, as he did so, what such an unusual proceeding might portend.

Pipes having been supplied, and the slaves withdrawn, the father and son sat for a time enveloped in the vapours of the delicately-scented gebeli; Yezid glancing from time to time at the handsome youth by his side, with a fond pride which blinded him to the wilfulness of his disposition; and with, perhaps, a pardonable vanity, endeavouring to trace in the high smooth brow, the large wild dark eye, the rich curved lip, and the short, thick, curling beard, a renewed picture of his own youth; while Ildji Rezà himself was turning over in his mind how he might best introduce the subject which was now uppermost in his thoughts.

"Effendim;" he said at length; "you may remember that some months back you talked to

me of bringing home a wife to my harem ; and that I made no willing reply to your suggestion, because I had never laid my head upon the cushion of quiet, and desired still to be left free to follow the dictates of my own will. What shall I say ?—I have since dwelt upon your words ; and I have heard from my mother that the maiden whom you had selected for me is as beautiful as a moonbeam, and as graceful as a gazelle. What is written, is written—I will marry her!"

" Alhemdullilah — praise be to Allah !" said the Merchant : " the sun is at length rising in the East. My son, life has hitherto been to you like the fiery sherbets of the Franks, pleasant and poisonous : but you are now recovering from the partial insanity under which you have laboured : and flinging away the husks of the dhourra, you will at last begin to hoard the grain. But what say I ? The bey is angered by your rejection of the maiden, and may perchance not listen to a renewal of our suit. You were hasty, Ildji Rezá, to speak ere you had turned

the words on your open palm, and seen that they were good and fitting."

The young man cast down his eyes, and remained silent.

"The wife whom I had chosen for you," continued his father; "had been described to me as a mirror of beauty ; a lily whose leaves were scarcely yet unfolded — a violet which had grown so secretly amid the seclusion of the harem, that she would have been as a jewel, which you would have dug from the mine ere another eye had rested on it. But yet forget not, my son, should my words yet prevail with the father of the maiden, that you are a man, and that your beard has grown : do not, in the contemplation of her beauty, forget that your days must not be spent in the harem of your wife—What are the loveliest maidens that they should be suffered to hold an undue empire ? Like the fair-seeming flower of Caraminia which poisons the wind as it sweeps over it, the unnatural dominion of a wife enervates the mind, and weakens the energies of her husband. Never forget, Ildji Rezà, that young and beautiful

though they be, they are yet women; and that in short, my son, they are all bosh — nothing!"

The listener nodded his concurrence to this sentiment.

"Tell no treason to a courtier—no heresy to a moullah—and no secret to your wife :" pursued the Merchant, perceiving that the attention of his son was poured out upon his words : "The tongue of a woman is more dangerous than the scimitar of a warrior, for you can never tell where its blows may fall ; and a wise man wastes not his words upon children. Neither put too much trust in your slaves ; but ever be vigilant yourself to protect your own honour. Why did the Prophet, who overran the world with a sword in one hand, and a houri in the other, put a veil before her face, and a lattice before her casement ? Was it not to point out how little dependance should be placed upon her own discretion."

"Well said, Effendim :" broke forth the young man earnestly : "it was. But fear not for me—no kelb will dare to laugh at my

*beard! — no zamparalik** for the mouths of *the massaldjhes* will ever issue from my harem! Inshallah, few know better than I the just value of every Aga Baba† in Damascus."

"And yet, my son, many have been wounded by the blade of which they well knew the temper —I have spoken."

"Wallah billah — by the Prophet! and you have spoken wisely ;" replied his son.

"And if I warn you not to build up your faith on the fidelity of an eunuch ;" followed up Yezid ; " so do I also counsel you never to let the folly of a woman ruffle your beard. Patience, my son, under the infliction of a wife's folly, is like the red earth of our own plains, which deadens the sting of the noxious reptile that has fastened on us."‡

"Korkma — fear not :" returned the young man : " your lesson shall not be lost upon me ; and now, I pray you, to hasten my suit with the

* Bit of Scandal.

† Chief of the Harem Guard.

‡ In the plain beyond the city is found a red earth which cures the stings of venomous insects.

44 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

bey, that when I close the door of my harem, I may no longer find it empty."

"Allah buyûk der;" was the only reply of the Merchant, as Ildji Rezâ descended from the sofa, pressed the hand of his father to his lips and forehead, and hastily quitted the apartment.

From the presence of Yezid the young man passed at once into the harem, and made his way to the chamber of his mother.

Amidè Hanoum was still a handsome woman; and the smile with which she received her son lit up her noble features, and gave a lustre to her eye, that for the moment almost renewed her youth.

"Khosh geldin, Ildji Rezâ;" she said fondly, as she flung back the heavy sleeve of her gold-embroidered antery, and extended to him her small white hand, which he immediately raised to his heart and lips; "You are welcome — and what news bring you from the city, my son? for to-day I have received no guests, and my slaves are as dull as an empty chibouque."

"Evallah ! Damascus, fair mother, is scarcely more full of kief* than your own harem ; its antiquity,† like that of a moullah, has done no service to its beard. A caravan passed out at sunrise on its way to Aleppo, numbering among its merchants two Frank Beys, whose dinars were more plentiful than their garments, which made good sport for the idle youths who were congregated at the great coffee-kiosque ;‡ but the train soon disappeared along the banks of the Golden River ;§ and the streets are again quiet."

"And what errand brings Ildji Rezà, the

* Spirit.

† Damascus is said to be the most venerable city in the world ; having been built by Uz, the son of Abraham, and grandson of Shem, the son of Noah. It was, moreover, the birthplace of Abraham's steward, Eliezar.

‡ In the city of Damascus is a coffee-house capable of containing with convenience five hundred individuals. The building is divided into two equal portions ; one being appropriated to the hot summer months, for which its arrangements are admirably calculated ; and the other to those of winter, where no less attention has been paid to the comfort of the visitors.

§ The river Barrady — formerly called by the Greeks the Chryserrhoas, or Golden River.

pride of Damascus, to the sofa of his mother?" asked the Georgian fondly; "Is his purse empty, or his head heavy from last night's revel?"

"Asteferallah—heaven forbid!" laughed her son; "for those are two evils which have not even the charm of novelty to recommend them. Ai, ai!" and he wrung his hands as if in anguish, while a mocking light danced in his eye: "I have been converted, and instead of gold, I am now coming to crave a wife."

"Wallah!" exclaimed Amidè Hanoum; "this is an hour for which I have long looked. How will the Khawaji Effendi rejoice, when, on his next visit to the harem, I read to him this new page in the volume of delight! And the wife whom I have wooed for you, Ildji Rezà, guzum, is fair as the snow-flake upon the mountain; pausing on the threshold of her loveliness, with the heart of a girl, and the beauty of a woman—the Bey her father of the best blood in the empire, and the Hanoum Effendi her mother a very model of propriety and politeness—Nay, more :" continued the Georgian, as she remarked

the indifference with which her son listened to these advantages; “it must not be breathed save between ourselves; but as you are now prepared to regard her with the eyes of affection, I may venture to whisper it in your ear—she loves you, Ildji Rezà! — She has seen you from her lattice as you passed along the street — she has watched you from her araba as you galloped along the plain — she was told that you were to be her husband — and now when she is restless, and her slaves would soothe her to sleep, they tell her tales of Ildji Rezà, for she will listen to none other.”

For the first time the young man’s breath came quick, and his lip quivered; “And she is fair, you tell me, mother?” he said, falteringly.

“As a peri!” answered Amidè Hanoum: “and when I wish to awaken her into brighter beauty, I talk to her of my son!”

“And will she listen?”

“As a hadji listens to the Korân at the Prophet’s tomb—with clasped hands, and bowed-down head. Her soul is as a mirror which

reflects but one image, and that one is Ildji Rezà!"

The young man with difficulty suppressed the groan that rose to his lips: never until that moment had he felt how bitter it must be to sacrifice one who loves you: " 'Tis at the best a mere girlish fancy;" he said, endeavouring to suppress his emotion; " were she told to-morrow that she must marry Mansoor Aga my friend, the mirror would receive a new shadow, and I should be forgotten!"

" My son!" said the Georgian, earnestly: " 'Tis not given to man to read a woman's heart! Do you believe that the same power which fetters our actions has dominion over our souls! Alas! you will not be convinced; and every day of your experience you eat the bitter apple of regret, when you might be enjoying the pomegranate of contentment. The first character inscribed upon a woman's heart is indelible—others may follow, which for a time appear as lasting, but they are written only by her fancy or her vanity, and they are effaced by time,"

"But has she not been told that when the Bey her father offered her to the son of Yezid in marriage, he folded his hands in the sleeves of his garment, and turned away?" asked the young man: "Can she love one who was insensible to her beauty and her tenderness?"

"My son;" said the Georgian earnestly: "affection never reasons; the heart is not logical —it is content to feel."

"And the Bey? Think you that he will yield her up to one by whom she had been slighted? He, at least, will have no advocate whispering in his heart."

"Ildji, my son;" said Amidè Hanoum, as she held her feather-framed hand-mirror towards his glowing countenance, and his eye rested upon his own luxuriant beauty: "the nightingale turns not aside from the rose-garden of Nishapor, when he may fold his wing in peace amid the blossoms. The Bey loves his child, and he knows that thou art beloved by her; the eye of beauty is too bright to be dimmed by tears, salt and bitter enough to

mingle with the waves of the great sea beyond the desert."

"And would she really weep for me?" again demanded the young man, touched to the heart by the words of his mother.

The Georgian, for all answer, again raised the mirror, and pointed with a smile, half archness, and half pride, towards its surface which once more reflected the image of the questioner.

Ildji Reza sighed; and a strange curiosity grew upon him to see this lovely woman, who amid his neglect, and his irregularities, had ventured to love him. Hitherto he had held his mother as a thing apart, which had, by some inexplicable good fortune, escaped from the pollution that had been poured forth on her sex for the son of Yezid knew nothing of women save their vices; but he now began to believe that there might yet be others, pure, and beautiful, and loving, whose smiles would be as a foretaste of paradise. His father had told him that his promised bride was lovely as a daughter of Peristan, and his mother dwelt upon her innocence, her love, and her devotion.

Ildji Rezà fell into a delightful dream ; and when he at length left the harem, he was an altered man.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ARAB STEED—*continued.*

THE son of Yezid first bent his steps to meidan,* resolved to restore to the mystic Ali his ill-omened Arab; but none knew whom he alluded. A numerous caravan was preparing to depart at daybreak on the morrow for Bagdad, and all save himself were active and preoccupied.

The space immediately around the building was heaped with merchandise; there were many mitars, carefully packed in woollen wraps, lest the weather should destroy their brightness—sword blades, knives, curious bridle-bits,

* A large field near the city, in which stands a caravan inn for pilgrims and strangers, who are maintained during their sojourn there at the expense of the Sultan.

other articles skilfully wrought in iron and steel, for which the city had long been famous ; while a few bales of merchandise, of a more costly and perishable nature, were carefully heaped together a little space apart, and guarded by black slaves. The artisans, meanwhile, to the amount of two or three hundred, whose credit was involved in the safe transport of their handicraft, were shouting, cavilling, and directing, at the pitch of their lungs ; and completed the confusion of the scene.

Strings of camels huddled together, some standing snuffing the air, and others lying placidly on the earth ; their long thin necks outstretched, and their soft, sleepy black eyes, slowly rolling from one side to the other as any sudden outburst of tongues roused them slightly from their lethargy, were also conspicuous ; while in the midst of them reposed the asses which led the train. Here and there the horse of a wealthy merchant, with its softly padded saddle, and tasselled brow-band and breastplate, was led through the space by a groom ; while crowds of hungry and yelling dogs were seen in every

direction, quarrelling and fighting over the garbage which had been flung out by the slaves the caravanseraï.

A group of hadjis stood looking on from distance ; and a few buffoons, santons, and devishes, were gliding among the crowd ; but the merchants and their followers were too busy to heed them ; and Ildji Rezà, convinced that he should obtain no information at so bustling moment, slowly past out of the enclosure, and entered the city gate.

Ere he left the meidan, the sun was rapidly sinking in the West ; and as his road lay past the palace of Kassim Bey, he involuntarily slackened his pace when he emerged from the covered street. On his right hand the fortress-castle with its graceful oval, flanked with four square towers, was casting long shadows across the earth, but he heeded them not : his thoughts were occupied for the first time by a woman !

It was strange that since Yezid the Merchant had asked for his son the daughter of Kassim Bey, the young man, regardless of the honour of such an alliance, had never spent a moment

in speculating upon the probable change which it would work in his fortunes : but now — when he was conscious that to satisfy a selfish vanity, he had sacrificed all the advantages which might accrue from it, even should he yet succeed in his suit, he had worked himself into a belief that he was madly in love with the maiden ; and, come what might, he was determined to judge with his own eyes whether she were worthy of all the panegyrics which had been lavished upon her beneath the roof of his father.

Coupled with this resolution grew a regret that he had spoken to his parents of his change of temper. Should they at once win the young beauty to his harem, he could have no opportunity of estimating her attractions through the medium of his own ingenuity, but must yield her up on the instant to his arch tempter, the Toorkoman. Regrets were, however, unavailing, and he at once resolved to spare neither subtlety nor danger to achieve his purpose.

In the first rush of this new fancy, Ildji Rezà thought of the Aga Baba of the Bey, who, as he judged from many a past experience, would

scarcely be proof against his gold ; but when he dwelt upon the idea of the fair girl who loved him, he resolved not to be indebted to so gross a medium for his success : and forgetting, in the energy of this new pursuit, the fearful penalty by which it was to be accompanied, he paused under the shadow of the Bey's dwelling, and sent a searching glance along the whole façade of the building. But the harem, as is generally the case, overlooked the gardens of the palace, and had no communication with the street, save by casements too high and too well guarded to admit of any ingress ; and one door, which was watched day and night by an eunuch. This difficulty, however, to the excited imagination of the young man, only added another charm to those which already encompassed his mistress ; and from gazing on the long dreary walls of the building, he turned away to follow those of the extensive pleasure grounds of the harem.

Tracing them as they clombe the gentle ascent behind the city, he noted with an experienced eye, every point which might promise advantage ; and remarked that several tall cedar trees flung

their long arms into the road beyond, as if wooing the incursion of the adventurous ; when, satisfied of the practicability of securing an entrance into the forbidden territory, he returned slowly homeward, and flung himself upon the sofa of repose.

But dawn had scarcely flooded the East, when Ildji Rezà, who had passed the night in dreams which seemed to have been steeped in the sherbet of paradise ; whose cushions had been smoothed by houris ; and whose brows had been fanned by the breezes that breathe of Peristan ; sprang from his sofa, his brain throbbing, and his pulses leaping like those of a chamois, and proceeded to the stable where he had left, half buried among the flexible leaves of the dhourra, his incomparable Arabian. If the creature were to be the engine of his misery, it might, at least, ere the dark hour came, be the instrument of his triumph ; but as he approached it, and listened while it neighed out with delight when he drew near, as though, among so many strangers, it had recognised a familiar face, he half forgot his fears, his doubts, and his misgivings, in his ad-

miration of an animal, such as he had never before beheld.

Springing to the saddle, the excited young man passed out through one of the eight gates of the city, and following the banks of the Golden river, galloped for awhile about the plain, fanned by the perfume-laden wind, and seeming to follow it in its course ; his bridlé-rein hung loose upon the neck of the gallant horse, but it needed not the guidance of its rider ; and Ildji Rezà felt a proud conviction, that never before had mortal steed obeyed the unuttered wishes of him who should have pointed out its path, like the animal that he bestrode.

As he returned to the city, and passed the palace of Kassim Bey, anxious to afford to the latticed inmates of the harem a view of his skilful horsemanship, he irritated the creature both in the mouth and flank, to make him prance and caracole ; and he was conscious that he was displayed to the greatest advantage, though his seat upon the saddle continued to be as safe and as easy as though he had been upon his sofa ; while a faint scream which came to his ear from

behind the guarded casement of the women's apartments, convinced him that, however secure he might himself feel, his situation appeared by no means equally so to the lookers-on. The voice of fear had been that of a young person, for it was musical even in its terror ; and Ildji Rezà forgot to speculate on the extraordinary properties of his horse, in the belief that it could have been none other than that of the fair Delsaïsè herself.

There is a charm in the voice of woman, even although it may be lifted in terror ; there is a mellowness, a depth, which seem to have been drawn from the recesses of the soul — a music, which neither fear nor anguish can totally overpower — and Ildji Rezà felt it even to the remotest corners of his soul. She loved him—she feared for him — for *him* ! And what part was he about to play in this strange drama ? All was yet in the hands of fate ; but his word was pledged — he was vowed to the ruin of loveliness and innocence — and he must abide by the pledge that he had given.

Having come to this conviction, the wisest

thing that the young man could have done would have been to avoid every opportunity of dwelling on the beauty and perfections of his promised bride ; and the sacrifice, when he was called upon to make it, would thus have been rendered less bitter ; but by that extraordinary perversity of judgment which constitutes the weakness of human nature, he not only drew from his mother, already too willing on her side to expatiate on so pleasant a theme, every particular relating to the maiden ; but, hour by hour, the inclination to look upon her grew more strong ; and, hour by hour, his reason made fainter efforts against the infatuation.

CHAPTER V.

THE ARAB STEED — *continued.*

DAY again waned ; and, as the many-coloured clouds that clustered in homage round the setting-sun, paying back in glory the light which he shed over them, were repeated in fainter tints on the ripple of the noble river, Ildji Rezà left his home ; and alone, and on foot, bent his way to the palace of the Bey.

As he passed the door of the harem, a female slave closely veiled, and muffled in a dark cloak, issued forth, and closed it hastily behind her ; and the young man felt at the moment as though the unconscious woman had shut against him the gate of paradise. In the next instant he resolved to follow her ; he could

not have accounted for the impulse — he did not seek to do so — and, for a considerable time, he contented himself with tracking her up one of the covered streets, and down another ; until, at length, when she arrived in the bazar, and he observed from the nature of her purchases, and the readiness with which she paid the price demanded, without hesitation or cavil, that they must be intended for the use of some one of very superior rank to herself, a hope grew upon him that she might even be the confidential attendant of Delsaïe Hanoum ; and, no sooner had the idea suggested itself, than he walked quietly up to the carpet of the dealer of whom she was purchasing an embroidered handkerchief of great beauty, whose muslin centre was richly bordered with a wreath of flowers, exquisitely wrought in needle-work, with coloured silks and gold ; and, affecting to be also in search of a similar article, he turned courteously towards the female, and requested her to assist him in the selection. Thus addressed, the slave glanced from beneath her veil at the speaker, and im-

mediately saluted him with respectful deference.

"Is not my lord's will mine?" she asked, as she turned a longer and more earnest look upon the young man; "and shall it not be even as he commands? May his days be many, and his shadow never decrease;" and she began to turn over the handkerchiefs with renewed energy; "But how may I tell the taste of my lord? were I still purchasing for my mistress, I would take this—" and she held towards him one which was wrought into a garland of minute rose-buds; "but it tells a tale of happy love, and my lord may not seek to make so soft a gift."

"Were I sure that it would be welcome, that is the very present which I should wish to offer;" replied Ildji Rezà, looking earnestly towards her; "but if it were returned to me with a sprig of rue among its folds, I cannot tell to what my felech might drive me in my despair."

"How say you, Hadji Ferhat?" laughed the slave, addressing herself to the green-tur-

64 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

baned dealer ; “ does my lord look like one whose love-gift is likely to be returned upon his hands ? ”

“ Mashallah ! ” retorted the crafty dealer stroking down his beard, quite satisfied by the manner of both his customers, that there was a mystery in the affair, be it what it might, which he could not fathom, and resolved, if possible, to turn it to his own advantage ; “ Mashallah ! I would peril my whole stock of merchandise on the chance — but if my lord really wishes to make a love-gift, shall I not show him a scarf of cachemire, of the colour of the leaf that the rose shuts closest to her heart ; having a border of golden threads, wrought into a passionate ballad of the Persian poet Hafiz ? ”*

“ Ne istersiniz — what do you want to do ? ” asked the slave in affected anger ; “ would you play the Jew with the Beyzadeh, Hadji ? Do I not know the scarf ? And am I not aware that my own mistress, the beautiful daughter of Kassim

* These beautiful and costly scarfs are by no means uncommon in the East. They are sometimes inscribed with passages from the Korân : and at others, as in the present case, with popular love ballads.

Bey—(may his weapon never rust !)—would herself have purchased it, had you not cast ashes upon your beard, by asking a price that would frighten any one but an infidel Frank?"

"And have I not a right to do so?" demanded Ferhat in his turn, with considerable asperity: "Is there such another scarf to be found in Damascus?—Bak, Effendim;" he continued, as he drew the delicate drapery from its case of cedar wood, and laid it before Ildji Rezà: "is that a thing to be cast before dogs?"

"Inshallah! no—" replied the young man, as he lifted a corner of the beautiful scarf; and with glowing cheek perused a couplet; "How many purses do you ask for this pretty toy?"

The price named was exorbitant; but Ildji Rezà scarcely heeded its amount, as he drew forth the embroidered bag containing his money, and paid down the gold without a remark: the pilgrim-merchant looking meanwhile as grave and collected as though he had only completed an honest bargain, instead of playing the knave as none but a hadji knows how to

play it ; and ringing every piece of coin separately lest he might be duped in his turn.

The slave, meanwhile, remained quietly looking on, as if conscious that she had not yet completed her share of the adventure ; but when Ildji Rezà had folded the scarf in the scarcely less beautiful muslin handkerchief, she paid for her own purchase, and after a courteous “ Salâm aleikam,” slowly moved away.

The young man was less tardy in following ; and was by no means surprised to observe that when she quitted the bazar she took a totally different road home from that by which she had come ; avoiding the close and covered streets, where at every instant she was liable to be elbowed by some passer-by ; and selecting the more open path that wound among the orchards and gardens by which the city is so thickly intersected. Nor did Ildji Rezà require to be informed of her reason for thus preferring a circuitous route, to that more direct one which would in half the time have conducted her to the door of the Bey’s harem ; but he at once gave her credit for the tact it displayed ; as most of

the gardens were enclosed by high walls, rendering the road as private as the circumstances required ; while at the same time she avoided the appearance of expecting that he would again address her.

Having at length reached a spot more secluded than any which they had yet passed, the young man quickened his pace, and overtook the attendant of his mistress, who at once understood his purpose ; and after as much hesitation as she considered necessary to enhance the value of her concession, and sundry assurances of the risk which she ran of her lady's displeasure, the scarf was transferred to her care, accompanied by a thousand hyperbolical asseverations, and a broad piece of gold, which was no less graciously received.

As they parted, twilight was falling over the earth ; and Ildji Rezà, in order to escape from his own thoughts, sauntered into the great coffee-house, and joined a party of his associates, who were smoking their chibouques, and sipping their coffee, to the music of a couple of man-

dolins, and as many small Arab drums, played upon by Jews; while two fine youths, the sons of one of the musicians, sang in alternate stanzas some of those lengthy and monotonous ballads in which the Turks delight.

“Khosh geldin, Ildji Rezà:” shouted the first idler who perceived his entrance; “you are so late that we feared you had been seized by the Wali—but gel, gel—come, come: here is room for you beside me—and these dogs of Hebrews are in full voice to-night. Wallah! I have been trying to persuade Naim to shave his beard, and expose it for sale in the bazar: it would fetch a good price, were it only because he has a pretty daughter.”

“My lord is merry to-night;” said the patient Jew, as he forced a smile at the pitiful pleasantry, and glanced down upon the long, grizzled beard which depended to his girdle; “and what am I that I should restrain his mirth.”

“Taib—well said, infidel;” laughed the young Aga; “is it not much that we suffer

such dogs, and fathers of dogs as you are, to wear beards, and to lock up their daughters?"

"And his companions exclaimed simultaneously, "Chok chay—it is much."

"May it please your highnesses;" faltered out the trembling Jew, whose very lips became livid at this second mention of his daughter: "My child Sara departed for Aleppo by the caravan that left the city yestermorn at sunrise."

"Hast thou dared, Kelb?" asked Hussein Aga, removing the chibouque from his lips, and fixing his eyes sternly on the wretched old man: "By whose permission did she pass the gate? hast thou forgotten we have already taught thee that the soles of thy feet are not made of camel's hide? Why went she to Aleppo?"

The miserable Naim quailed beneath the question; "As the Prophet is in Paradise"—he began, but he was instantly silenced by a cry of "Unbeliever! Infidel! whose dog art thou that thou shouldst dare to talk of the Prophet of the Faithful? Wherefore went thy daughter to Aleppo?"

The aged Hebrew wrung his hands in agony;

"She is gone, your highnesses, to nurse a sick kinsman, who is on the bed of death."

"Alhemdullilah!" sneered another of the party: "I have also a kinsman at Aleppo. How say you, Aga, shall we overtake the caravan, and protect the pretty Sara by the way?"

The handsome young Aga nodded smilingly, and was about to reply, when Ildji Reza exclaimed, "Jew, thou liest in thy beard, for I saw the caravan pass out, and even watched the women as they mounted, and not one of thy spawn was among them."

More threats were uttered, rather in sport than anger, by the party of young men; and then the subject was suffered to die away; and the Hebrews resumed their discordant minstrelsy, for which they were ultimately rewarded with quite as many curses as coins. Time, meanwhile, wore on; and it grew deep into the night; nor was it until every good Musselmaun had long dropped his head upon the cushion of rest, that the idle and dissolute young men, who, after the departure of the Jews, had exchanged their

coffee and sherbets for the more potent beverages of the Franks, separated each to his dwelling, with quickened pulses and throbbing brains.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ARAB STEED — *continued.*

FAR differently had the young and innocent Delsaïsè passed the early hours of the night. The slave Ziba no sooner parted from the son of Yezid, than she hastened to the harem of her master, and having delivered to the wife of the Bey the various purchases which she had made in the city, she left the apartment in search of her beautiful young mistress. She lost no time in the palace, for she knew that at this hour the fair girl was ever to be found in a garden-kiosque containing a fountain of white marble, and overlooking a small parterre, of which the flower-beds were fashioned into intricate and pleasant

forms, and filled with a variety of sweet-scented and gaily-coloured blossoms. Thither she accordingly bent her steps, but even accustomed as she was to gaze upon the lovely Del-saïsè at all hours, she yet paused a moment in admiration ere she entered.

The tapestry curtain was drawn aside, and the moonlight streamed into the kiosque ; where, after turning the waters of the basin into liquid diamonds, it fell on the fair form of the young beauty, who lay, wrapped in a flowing robe of soft white muslin, on a divan of silver tissue. Her long dark tresses, plaited with large pearls, fell over her bosom ; a crimson turban cinctured her brow ; her head was pillow'd upon her hand, and her large eyes were bent earthward ; her papooshes of purple velvet sprinkled with gems lay on the carpet near the edge of the fountain ; and one of her small feet, dazzling in its whiteness, hung lightly over the front of the divan.

The step of the slave aroused her from her reverie, and, as Ziba prepared to enter the kiosque, she started and looked up : “ You are

welcome, Zibamou ;” she said, with a sweet smile ; “ you have lingered later than usual in the city, and I have wearied for you. Tell me — have you seen him ?”

The slave seated herself upon the carpet at the feet of her young mistress, and looked up into her eyes ; “ You have then thought of him, Effendim, during my absence ; and yet, of what avail to think of one who has slighted you, scorned you, and shaken the dust from his feet as he passed your threshold ? But turn not away in anger. I have never blamed him when other tongues in the Bey’s harem have been loud and bitter ; I am not about even to chide you for your question ; but rather to tell you that you have done well, for I have talked with him in the bazar.”

“ Ziba ! my own Ziba !” exclaimed the beautiful girl, clasping her fair hands together in an extacy of delight ; “ this day must be marked as the happiest of my life ! And did he speak of me ? Did he ask if I loved him ? And, above all, Ziba, my dear Ziba, did he say that he loved me ?”

“ Mashallah !” cried the laughing slave ; “ here are a hundred questions in a breath : why it would require the lungs of a moullah to answer them ! Listen, and I will tell my tale ; but first, oh ! Sultana, he is as handsome as the day. He has eyes — no, never, never, did I behold such eyes ! — teeth — talk to me of pearls, I say ouf ! pearls are as henna beside them — hands like the water-lily — and a beard — Asteferallah ! there is not such another beard in Damascus.”

“ But what did he say, Ziba ?” interposed the anxious girl : “ I know that he is handsome enough to turn the heads of the houris — I have seen him from my lattice—Tell me rather, therefore, what he said ?”

“ You have seen him, Effendim, say you !” echoed the slave, in an accent of scorn. “ You cannot even guess what he is like ! Have you eyes that will look without winking on the sun ? Sen bilirsen — you know best ; but if you have not, you have never seen Ildji Rezà.”

“ But what said he, Zibamou ?” again urged the maiden.

“ He said,” at length commenced the slave ;

“ that he lived but for you — that his thoughts all flew to you with the force of a stone hurled by an elephant — that he dreamt of you on his sofa — that his blood turned to fire when a fear of your displeasure grew upon him—that—in short, sultana mou, if I undertake to repeat to you all he said, we shall get no further by day-dawn ; enough that he extorted from me a promise that I would meet him again to-morrow.”

“ Happy, happy Ziba !” murmured out the excited girl.

“ Nay, for that matter,” laughed the hand-maiden ; “ it is even as it may be; do I not go to hear him talk of you ? Say rather, happy Delsaïsè Hanoum, who will be the bride of the handsomest youth in the city ; for his bride you will be, in spite of all that is past, as surely as though it had been foretold by the sagest Karabash of Damascus. Think, my sultana ; did not the pretty daughter of the Wali marry a hunchback ? Did not Isau Aga give the only child he had to Daoud Effendi, whose odious squint ever reminds one of the Evil Eye ? Has not Djamilè Hanoum thrown away your favourite playfellow,

Shereen, upon old Amin the Cadi, whose beard is as white as your own hand? Eh, vah! who is the happy one here? answer me that."

And the young beauty sighed out in her delight: " You are right, Ziba; it is indeed I."

" Guzel — good :" said the attendant: " but do you believe that nothing more passed between us? Asteferallah! Ildji Rezà is no sâkal-siz! See —" and she drew from beneath her cloak the costly present of the son of Yezid, which the maiden seized with a scream of rapture. " It will tell its own tale, and needs no words from me. But hearken, Effendi mou— my mistress; you were to have been the wife of this young man, or I would have undertaken no such mission."

The prudence, tardy as it was, of her companion, was, however, lost upon the beautiful girl, who, full of the delight of being beloved for the first time, had already pressed the offering of her lover to her heart and lips, and was now busily employed in decyphering the characters of the embroidered border. When she had read the whole, she again embraced the splendid

token of Ildji Rezà's affection ; and then, bending over her faithful Ziba, she repeated to her in a clear whisper the words of the ballad, which many a Persian maiden, almost as fair and as fond as herself, has sung to her mandolin :—

LOVE AND THE LOTUS.

FROM HAFIZ.

When, in the east, the golden sun
 Has risen from his ocean bed,
 And o'er the earth, so lately dark,
 The glories of his brightness shed ;
 The Lotus, on the river's breast,
 Lifts, with deep love, her dewy eye,
 And thanks him for the life and light
 He sheds upon her from the sky.

At noon her loving gaze pursues
 His proud career, untired, unturned ;
 And when at length he slowly sets,
 She watches every beam that burned,
 Until the last is lost—and then
 She downward bends her gentle head,
 And leans in sadness o'er the stream,
 To weep till morn his brightness fled.

So, lady, do I turn to thee,
 Through every change, in every hour ;
 Heedless of all on earth beside,
 Save thy pure beauty's thralling power ;

In thy loved light I live—but when
I lose the glory of its ray,
Like to the Lotus, bowed and bruised,
My spirit weeps itself away !

“ Mashallah !” exclaimed Ziba, as the murmur of the sweet voice ceased ; “ ‘tis the love-song of a peri ! And even so, Sultana, does the Effendi talk. If many of the fair messages with which he entrusted me were to be put into verse, they would make just such ballads as that ! Wallah ! what shall I say to him to-morrow in reply ?”

“ What ought you to say, dear Ziba !” asked the innocent girl ; “ you shall tell him what you will ; only forget not to assure him that I love him as the lotus loved the sun ; and that even so have I watched him when he has passed under the windows of the harem — for the rest, you know best—say to him what you will.”

“ Taib, Effendi mou—well said, my mistress ; but have you nothing to send him as a token that I am an honest interpreter of your heart ?”

Delsaïsè hesitated for a moment ; young and unpractised as she was in love, she yet shrank

with instinctive delicacy from so decided a measure ; but the encouraging words and flatteries of Ziba soon won her to consent, and she ultimately severed from her head one of its glossy braids wreathed with pearls, and, having entwined it about a bunch of jasmin flowers which lay beside her on the sofa, she delivered it into the keeping of her attendant. " My heart goes with it ;" she said, as a tear swelled in her large dark eye ; " but there can be no evil in the gift to one who, you assure me, will one day be my husband."

" Evil !" exclaimed the slave : " who dreams of evil ? Even if you had given it to the Effendi with your own hand, where could evil exist ? Was he not chosen for you by the Bey your father ? and might he not have married you, if he had wished it, months ago ? Is he not now eager to do so ? You owe him at least a return for the grace that he has done you."

" Nay, chide me not, Ziba ; " smiled her mistress, whom the energy of the attendant had served to reassure ; " I am so happy that I cannot listen to any words save those of affection

and gentleness. How shall I repay you, dear, kind Ziba, for the interest that you have shewn in my happiness? My heart leaps as if it had but newly sprung into life; and I could almost chide the darkness that will last so many hours, before you can again see him!" and she buried her face among the cushions of the divan, and shed a flood of those passionate tears which scald the spirit from whence they spring, and destroy for ever the bloominess of its first perfect purity: tears wrung by the impulses of earth from the hitherto untouched soul; withering as they fall, and blighting in their hot flow the very sources of their being.

From this luxury of grief she was aroused by the rustling of leaves immediately outside the kiosque; it was not the sighing of the wind, for the night was calm and still, and not a breath bent the starry jasmine flowers, whose shadows were reflected on the marble floor. The ear of Ziba also caught the sound, but murmuring to herself "Here comes that Ibn Sheitan—that son of Satan, the Aga Baba—may his pillauf be made of green rice!" she quietly dropped her

head once more upon her knees, regardless of the interruption.

But the fair Delsaïsè was not of the same opinion ; and she still continued to gaze through the open door, fearing she knew not what, and ashamed to confess her panic to her attendant, until the clear moonlight was shut out by the dark figure of a man, who stood on the threshold.

The maiden uttered a faint scream, and drew closer to the slave ; while the intruder, clearing the marble basin at a bound, flung himself at her feet, and, raising his eyes to hers, disclosed the countenance of Ildji Rezà !

CHAPTER VII.

THE ARAB STEED — *continued.*

I HAVE said that, ere the young men who were congregated at the great coffee-house separated for the night, they had drunk deep, and become excited with noise and clamour; but I have yet to tell you that when the son of Yezid once more found himself alone, his brain burning, and his brow fevered, he turned aside from the street leading to his father's house, and followed the same solitary path that the slave had selected some hours before. For a time he walked slowly, buried in thought, and indulging in a halcyon dream, rendered only the more brilliant by his partial exaltation; but as he pursued the subject, his step grew hurried and irregular, his breath came quick, and the blood

receded to his heart. Suddenly he stopped, hesitated, and then with the speed of desperation rushed down a narrow road leading to the palace-gardens of the Bey. When he had reached them, he walked for a short time to and fro beneath the wall, gazing upwards upon the over-hanging trees; until, having selected that which best suited his purpose, he unwound his turban, and, fastening a heavy stone into the long scarf of which it was formed, flung it skilfully across a projecting bough, and thus securing his ascent, soon found himself upon the wall, looking down upon what to his excited imagination appeared to be the entrance of the Seventh Heaven!

All was indeed calm and beautiful in that sweet spot — the nightingale was pouring forth his love-song to the rose; and the moon was flooding the earth with silver; the flowers were paying back her light in fragrance; and the lotus blossoms were mirrored in the sparkling water, as they bent their heads beneath the diamond shower that fell upon them.

For a moment the heart of Ildji Reza quailed within him. The stillness and purity of the

scene had schooled and sobered his wild and phrenzied feelings ; and he felt like a guilty soul hovering on the confines of Paradise. But this involuntary compunction endured not long : another rush of reckless emotion followed ; and he flung himself amid the branches of the cedar-tree, and descended into the garden.

Hastily he readjusted his turban ; and then he stole along under the shadow of the wall, in the direction of the palace ; when suddenly he came upon the kiosque of the fountain. His path being undetermined, he bent his steps thither ; and he had arrived nearly at the threshold, ere the possibility of its being tenanted suddenly occurred to him, when he hastily concealed himself among the shrubs by which it was surrounded ; until he distinctly distinguished two female figures within. In the next moment, he became satisfied that one of these was the slave Ziba ; and as he gazed upon the younger and fairer creature on the divan, his heart at once assured him that this could be none other than Delsaisè, his promised bride. For a while he gazed entranced, drinking in her

pure moonlighted beauty ; until, no longer able to control the feelings which overwhelmed him, he rushed forward, and flung himself at her feet.

The exclamation which had risen to the lips of the young beauty died away, and the question arose in her mind—Had he heard her last words ? Was he conscious that the tears which yet glistened in her eyes had been shed for him ? —She glanced towards her attendant, but there was nothing to reassure her in the aspect of the paralyzed Ziba ; imprudent as she had been, no affectionate woman had never dreaded such a catastrophe as this !

For a while there was silence : the timid girl remained with averted head and heaving heart, incapable of uttering a sentence ; and the girl, tranced and happy Ildji Rezà hesitated for the first few moments to break so exquisite a pause, while Ziba, painfully aware that she was in altogether blameless in the affair, hid her burning brow upon the lap of her mistress, and sobbed aloud.

“ Fairest of the daughters of Peristan !”

length whispered the enraptured lover, as he possessed himself of her small white hand ; “ Houri, whom the Prophet has sent on earth to show man in what mould the shapes of Paradise are made—Star of the summer-night, before whose light the moon herself grows pale — Sultana, at whose feet the world might bow in homage, and yet fail to render thee thy due—Wilt thou not speak to me, that I may listen to the music of the bâlbûl ? Wilt thou not smile on me, that I may see the day dawn in the east, while to all beyond thine influence the earth is wrapped in darkness ? The lowliest of thy slaves is at thy feet—his life is in thy hands —he asks it of thee as a boon.”

He paused, and a smile, like the dawn to which he had likened it, stole over the fair features of the bewildered girl ; but she had not power to articulate a syllable.

“ Take that forfeit life ;” pursued the young man, conscious of his advantage ; “ that life which my entrance here has placed at your mercy. I shall yet be happy, for I shall die at your feet !”

“ Asteferallah —Heaven forbid !” murmured the low soft voice.

“ I shall live, then !” exclaimed Ildji Rezà, as he flung his arm about the shrinking girl, and drew her to his bosom ; “ My love—my soul—my bride !”

“ Eh, vah !” whispered Ziba, rousing herself from her paroxysm of terror : “ What is this, Effendim ? Are you a man, that you steal thus upon our privacy, and peril our lives ? Have we deserved this at your hands ?”

But Ildji Rezà heeded her not ; the fairest creature whom the earth ever held was in his arms—upon his heart — her long hair swept across his hand—her breath came to his cheek. She loved him !—his image alone occupied her — and how could he think of aught save her ?

Ere they parted, the dawn, veiled in her dusky mantle, was slowly ascending the sky ; and the awakening birds were twittering in the boughs, and shaking from the leaves, among which they had been nestled, the diamond-drops that they had worn throughout the night : the lovers had even talked of future meetings ; and

the fair cheek of the maiden had flushed crimson as she promised to hold the visit of her imprudent suitor a secret from all save Ziba. Often did they murmur a low farewell, and as often did Ildji Rezà delay yet another moment to press the delicate fingers of his mistress to his lips, and to hear her breathe out another parting word. But the slave, as she marked a few streaks spread across the sky, red as the banner of the Prophet, would brook no further venture ; and, while the weeping and bewildered girl waved her last adieu to a lover whose rashness had not only perilled his own life, but her's, Ziba hurried him to a point of the wall where a decayed buttress afforded a safe and easy mean of escape from the garden ; and, as he failed not at the same moment to remark, secured to him as commodious a mode of ingress.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ARAB STEED—*continued.*

THE new moon sprang to the brow of night, and crowned it with a crescent of silver ; and the beautiful daughter of Kassim Bey, and the son of Yezid the Khawaji, sat hand in hand in the kiosque of the fountain, and looked upon its pale and feeble light. It grew larger, until it sailed like a bark formed of one vast diamond upon the wavy clouds of the calm star-lighted heavens—and still they gazed on it together : changed only in having felt their love brighten and increase like the orb on which they looked—still he was at her feet, and held her hand, and beguiled the hours of night with gentle words : and the innocent and unsuspecting girl loved the

growing light, for she knew not that to her it portended evil. And next it rose to its high place like a burning world, poised in mid-air, and ruddy with the flame which fed upon its heart; till, as it reached its throne of sapphire sprinkled with diamonds, it grew clearer and purer in its brightness, and flooded all the earth with silver. And the lovers were yet together—tracing its quivering light upon the leaves, and weaving sweet fancies worthy of such an hour.

But the mahâk* came at last — and, as the young man watched the outline of the fair orb diminish, he suddenly remembered his vow, and quiet departed from him — the fair cheek of his beloved looked livid in the clear light, and a sadness seemed to dwell in her deep eyes. He remembered his vow, and his spirit melted within him. On that night he tore himself from his beautiful mistress with agony in his soul. There might yet be time to save her—he bounded along the garden path—he clombe the wall like a chamois—he looked neither to the right nor the left to mark if he were observed, but ran madly down

* Decline of the moon.

the road in the direction of the city ; conscious, even amid his anguish, that the shout of detection followed at his heels.

Like a hunted animal, he doubled upon his pursuers ; he crouched along under the shadows of the buildings—he rushed like a maniac across the open spaces which intervened upon his path. And still he flew on in the direction of the Meidan, until, in the broad moonlight immediately confronting him, he saw the Bectachy who had witnessed his unholy vow.

“ Well found !” shouted the Dervish ; “ a few bounds more, and you are saved—Haste, haste — the blood-hounds are at your heels !” Instinctively he obeyed ; and, grasping the hand that was extended to him, followed like a child. He heard the shouts, which had so lately grown with terrible rapidity upon his ear, die away in the distance ; and then he flung himself down upon the earth in a paroxysm of agony ; and writhed like one in the death-spasm.

“ And whither were you bound so fast, my son ?” asked the Dervish ; as Ildji Rezà, slowly recovering his self-possession, raised himself on his elbow, and glanced wildly round the tomb

into which his companion had dragged him : “ What has the owl of affliction screamed into the hollow of your ears, to move you thus ? You struck the fiery hoof of speed on the stony path of flight, like one who escaped from the pestilence —what may this storm of passion signify ? ”

“ Father : ” gasped the fugitive : “ I am accursed — I have become an Ibn Sheitan — a son of Satan — touch me not with the hem of your garment : but pass on, and let me die.”

“ Ne oldou — what has happened ? ” again urged the Bectachy : “ when we last met, you seemed to soar above the power of your felech, and to have expanded the wings of pride in the akash* of happiness—Why do you now grovel in the dust of disappointment ? ”

“ Where is the traitor Ali ? ” asked the young man in reply ; “ where is the Toorkoman fiend who bought from me the strings of my heart, and the pulses of my being ? If you cannot bring me to him ; then once more I say—let me die.”

* Eastern Philosophers insist on a fifth element, which they designate *akash* ; and which they invest with perfect purity.

“ Pouff ! pouff ! — pshaw ! pshaw ! Young blood chills not so soon ; ” retorted the Dervish ; “ talk not of the dues of Asræl while you have the power to defraud him of them. Why do you despair ? Has your gallant steed foundered ? or has he spurned the bit ? Why seal the trouble of your heart with the signet of secrecy ? The physician who has not learnt the nature of the malady can never save the patient. Tell me your grief ; and who knows but I may find its cure. Have I not already saved you from the negro hounds who were yelping at your heels, attracted thither no doubt by some imprudence of your own ? Why then should you hesitate to confide in me ? ”

“ What can I say, oh ! father ? ” exclaimed Ildji Rezà passionately : “ I have strewed the path of vanity with the pearls of happiness, and they have been trodden underfoot. Oh, that I could grasp the skirts of the future with the fingers of repentance : and that it were yet my fate to call Delsaïsè my own ! ”

“ Are these tears, these pangs, then for a woman ? ” asked the Bectachy scornfully : “ and is

it indeed the son of Yezid, who so lately laughed the sex to scorn, who now moistens the marble floor with the drops of unavailing and unmanly passion? Have you not the steed in your stable whom you coveted more than all the beauties of the Imperial harem? and do you play the sakal-siz for a puny girl?"

" You chide in vain, father ; " said the young man, recovering his self-possession by a violent effort ; " rather assist me to find the wretch who has cheated me into ruin—my vow must be cancelled, though I pave the floor of his tent with gold—Let him take back the horse, and restore to me my soul—and then let us part, never to breathe the same air again."

" You talk wildly, my son. Ali the Khawaji has left the city. You cannot now pluck the rings of obedience from the ears of destiny—You have sworn, and you must abide by your oath."

" And when? — when? " gasped out the victim.

The Dervish pointed to the moon ; " The mahâk has commenced ; " he said solemnly : " you remember the compact."

Ildji Rezà smote upon his brow with his clenched hand, and ground his teeth like a maniac.

“ When will man learn his error ! ” murmured the Bectachy, communing with his own thoughts : ‘ Thus is it ever that the shallow cup of youth overflows with the froth of folly : and that time brings only repentance as its dowry.”

“ Can you not save us both ? ” urged the young man ; “ oh, father ! could you but imagine half her beauty, her gentleness, her truth, you would feel that such a fate must destroy her, as that which my own madness has drawn down—Do you ask gold ? I will pour into your lap the pure ore of Sumatra which is current over the whole earth. Do you love power ? I will be your slave, and make my laws of the desires of your lips—Your days shall flow like the sacred waters of Zimzim ;* and your nights shall be nights of peace. But save us, father, or we perish. Read the stars for us, and teach me how we may escape.”

“ Son of Yezid : ” replied the Dervish ; “ why

* A fountain near Mecca.

do you thus sit down in the sepulchre of sorrow, and heap ashes upon your own head, when you should arouse the man within you, and shake off the woman-weakness that bows your spirit. Love is the very moon of madness, laughing amid the darkness over the terrors of its power ; a ghoul, whose food is the heart of its victim, and whose wine is its tears ; whose bonds are the chains of folly, and whose music is the howling of those who wear them. Earth is full of its bitterness ; and the very houris who have dared its sway, have bowed beneath the curse ; joy dwells not with them even in the paradise of the faithful, and its flowery paths are strown for them with burning sand. Up then, son of Yezid, and fling off this diadem of serpents, which you have woven about your brow."

"Dervish, you preach in vain ;" said the mournful Ildji Rezà ; "help me if you can — to chide me is useless — he who has once looked on the light cannot dwell in darkness with a merry heart."

"Ne apalum—what can I do, my son ?" asked the Bectachy ; "Listen to me ; the mahâk has

but commenced ; you have yet time for reflection. But beware of repeating the folly of to-night. You have been seen and pursued : and, had I not been upon your path, to guide the foot of flight into the way of safety, you would ere now have been sacrificed to the offended honour of the Bey. Be thankful therefore for your escape—*La illaha illallah*—there is but one Allah ! and you are yet in a whole skin. Rest quietly here for to-night. You are safe under the shadow of a holy name ; and you will not be the first sinner who has owed life and limb to the same protection. Here is food :" and he produced from beneath his khirkheh a handful of dates and a flap of bread :—"and here :" and as he spoke he dislodged a stone within the tomb, and drew forth a small skin filled with liquid : "here is wine — wine from Cyprus — as sweet and almost as thick as honey.— You look amazed, young man, but you have yet much to learn, even in the good city of Damascus. And now, eat and refresh yourself ; while I go forth and strive to learn whether you were recognized in your flight. If the Ibn Sheitan—

the sons of Satan—who pursued you, know no more than that they gave chase to a man, without suspecting his identity, then may you go boldly to the house of your father, and recommence your career of folly ; but if the cry was raised at the heels of the son of Yezid, you must gather up the skirts of speed, and pass the city walls while there is yet time. Farewell then for a while. When you have eaten and drank, you can replace the skin in its hiding-place ; and should I tarry on my mission, you must lay your head on the pillow of patience, and sleep or dream till my return.”

And, without awaiting further parley, the Dervish strode out of the tomb.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ARAB STEED—*continued.*

Ildji Rezà sat for a time with his head bowed upon his clasped hands, like a figure hewn in stone ; but after a while the faint sickness of exhaustion stole upon him, and he lifted the wine-skin to his lips, and drained a deep draught. Again and again he raised it ; and at length sleep stole upon him, and, stretching himself along behind one of the pillars which supported the dome of the building, he was soon buried in slumber.

How long he might have slept he knew not, when he was suddenly aroused by a hoarse peal of laughter immediately in his vicinity ; and, raising himself gently on his elbow, he discovered

that the night was spent; and that, to use the figurative expression of a Persian poet, “ morning, in her mantle of dun edged with saffron, was, like a shepherdess of the plains, driving her fair flock of stars before her to the shade.”

The chilly dawn was peering into the building; and as his eye became familiarised with the faint light, Ildji Rezà discovered that he had slept in company with the very outcasts of the city. There were two filthy hadjis, covered with rags, and loud with ribaldry: a couple of those convenient wayfarers who receive the wages of wealthy indolence, and save at once their own souls and those of their employers; while they drive a lucrative trade by vending to the home-staying devotees shreds of rag, morsels of painted glass, and splinters of marble, collected at the Prophet’s Tomb. It being part of the system of these money-making pilgrims to enhance in the eyes of their patrons the fatigues and difficulties of their undertaking, they are always careful to appear before them both ragged and filthy; and those who now attracted the

attention of Ildji Rezà were masters of their trade.

It was from the throat of one of these hadjis that the laugh had proceeded which roused the young man from his slumber ; and it had scarcely died away when a howl, deep, prolonged, and fierce, as though it had been uttered by a wild beast in the recesses of the desert, formed its hideous answer ; and as the son of Yezid grasped his handjar, and bent forward to learn its cause, he saw, crouching near the base of a pillar, a miserable wretch whose elf-locks fell over his lank and haggard countenance, and whose grizzled beard, dank with the night dew, and matted into thick ropes from neglect, hung to his waist ; his legs were bare from the knees, and covered with scars, as though his path through life had been among briars ; his raiment was scarce, and coarse, and worn ; and his long thin fingers were clasped in the mass of hair that hung over his wild fierce eyes, dragging it aside, as he glared upon a santon, or professional saint, who was squatted on an old rug beside him.

“ Peace ! father of asses ! ” said the elder hadji, shaking his clasped hand at the wretched maniac ; “ this is what thy vain folly has done for thee. Do you remember this howling idiot, Hadji Latif ? ” he asked of his companion : “ there were none like him at the Tekiè of Scutari, when he first joined the brotherhood ; but his zeal was stronger than his head ; and though, as you may see by his scarred limbs and the seams upon his chest, he tried to keep it cool by blood-letting, it grew too hot for him at last——”

“ It burns ! it burns ! ” howled the miserable maniac, catching a glimpse of the hadji’s meaning ; “ La illaha illallah ! ” and as the words passed his lips, he fell flat upon the earth, with closed eyes and rigid limbs.

It was a spectacle of horror ; and springing to his feet, Ildji Rezà bounded across the floor, and rushed through the portal of the tomb.

“ A spy ! a spy ! ” shouted the santon ; “ Let us away, my friends, or we shall have the city-guard upon us.”

The hadjis appeared to consider the advice

seasonable, for, tightening their girdles, and replacing their turbans with all speed, they left the building; being probably too well acquainted with the tender mercies of the Cadi of Damascus, to be desirous of placing either their feet or their throats at his disposal.

Ildji Rezà stood for a while in the chill morning air, panting for breath, and sick at heart, ere he remembered the wretched maniac in the tomb; when, shaking off the disgust that had grown on him, he slowly retraced his steps, and found the miserable man still lying extended on the marble floor like a corpse; his livid lips parted, and drawn tightly back from his large and discoloured teeth: every limb inflexible and rigid, and his long wild locks scattered over the pavement.

To fling over him water from a fountain which was near at hand, and to force down his throat a draught of the wine which the Bectachy had left for his own use, was the work of a moment to Ildji Rezà; and, as the madman writhed and struggled with returning consciousness, he soothed him with words and accents of gentle-

ness, such as had probably not met the ears of the ill-fated man for years.

“ Gel, gel, gardash mou — come, come, my brother ;” he said kindly ; “ rouse yourself, or I must leave you in your misery, for I look to be summoned ere long ;” and the maniac turned his deep hollow eyes upon him in wonder as he asked,

“ Who are you ? — Monker and Nakir have left me, the mist rolls back, and the blue sky once more floods my soul — Where am I ? This cannot be Paradise, for I have not trodden the Eternal Bridge ; and the earth on which I lie chills me as though I were pillow'd on a serpent.”

“ You are safe, quite safe ;” was the reply ; “ Sit up, lean on me, and swallow some of this cordial ; here are none to harm you.”

“ Harm me ! ” echoed the maniac, as he drained a deep draught of the refreshing wine of Cyprus ; “ my day of fear is past ;” and he clasped his long bony hands together, and his head drooped upon his breast as he murmured ; “ By sea and by land — by storm and by calm —

in the crowded city — on the wide waste of waters — above me, beneath me, about me on every side—they are ever there !—ever !—And she, my own one, my beloved Comladeve,* she for whom I bore all, she alone is absent—”

The low despairing tone of the Dervish struck to the heart of Ildji Rezà : he knew that it was the mere wailing of a madman ; but he felt, as he listened, that it must have been a biting misery which had shattered the intellect of the wretched man beside him ; and again he soothed, encouraged, and condoled, until his accents melted the spirit of the stricken one, and he wept tears in which there was no bitterness.

Suddenly he grasped the arm of the young man, and said eagerly : “ I know not what you have given me — I care not — but, though I am mad — mad — with a bursting pulse and a burning brain, I can thank you — and you shall hear all — all ! — I have not told the tale for years — I never thought to tell it again — but a sudden strength is come upon me ; and, ere I die, I will clear my breast of the frightful secret. Allah

* Water-lily.

kerim ! the vulture that gnaws my heart will soon miss its meal—the worm that has coiled itself in the cells of my brain will ere long unwreathe its folds—” And flinging his arms frantically in the air, he yelled out like a wounded animal, ere, by another transition of feeling, he cowered closer into the corner of the building, and in a rapid voice commenced his wild dream of the past.

CHAPTER X.

THE ARAB STEED—*continued.*

“ I know not what crime I had committed ; I am ignorant if I was even accused of any ; but at midnight men stood beside my bed, and around it ; and my narrow chamber was filled with dusky forms, seen dimly athwart the darkness. Shapes of fear they were ; armed, and strong, and tall in the shadow ; and their heavy weapons struck discordantly and harshly on the marble floor as they moved silently about the chamber.

“ I strove to speak, but I could not ; Allah knows the terror which froze up my soul ! my tongue seemed parched, and clave to my fevered palate : fear had paralyzed my energies, and I could not move a limb.

“ I had little time to struggle with the dread that pressed upon my spirits ; a strong grasp raised me from my mat, and busy hands were soon folding my garments round me. They put my turban on my head, and fastened it beneath my chin with the chain which had sustained my dagger ; my arms were pinioned tightly behind my back, and secured by my own costly shawl—that shawl which I had bound in pride about me when I last beheld Comladeve, the peri of my spirit. What a vision did that memory conjure up ! I was about to be borne I knew not whither ; the hour would come when she would look for me again ; when she would have renewed the henna on her delicate hands, and scattered perfumes in her hair ; when she would listen near her latticed casement for my coming step, and hear only the breath of the evening wind sighing over the roses and the lotus-flowers ; her zebec would be silent, and her heart heavy ; for her loved one might not stand beneath her window in the starlight, nor look with her upon the moon.

“ These thoughts swept hurriedly over my

soul like the winged steed of Mahomet through a stormy sky. I struggled, but the effort came too late — I was lifted from the earth ; a coarse beneesh was folded round me, and I was flung rudely across a war-horse guided by a strong hand. Away we flew like the wind ! and, shrouded as I was, I distinguished the hoof-clang of many steeds, and the hoarse tones of their riders, urging them to yet greater speed.

“ On, on, we sped ; and, as I lay panting across the animal which bore me, the coarse covering pressed rudely upon my mouth and nostrils, and I sickened for air. For a while I became senseless, and when at length I again breathed freely, the wind of an autumnal evening was fanning my brow like the wing of a peri. I thought that I had wakened in Paradise ; and I hastily looked up to meet the dark eyes which were to welcome me to the everlasting bowers.

“ I gave but one glance, ere I again closed my aching lids : I was surrounded by dark forms ; they pressed closely about me ; and a crowd of turbaned heads were turned towards me, as if awaiting my restoration to consciousness. A

deep murmur ran through the throng as I looked up ; again a strong hand lifted me from the earth, and I involuntarily gazed once more around.

“ We were standing on the verge of a dark rock ; and the wide sea, in all its might and its majesty, was beneath us. I gave one frenzied shriek—it was the voice of my agony, as I hung in air for an instant, in the grasp of that iron hand ! .

“ As the scream died away, a deep voice sounded in my ear—the words were seared into my heart—How often since that moment have I uttered them with the laugh of partial insanity, or the hollow tone of reckless despair, when none were near to listen :—

“ ‘ Be the sea thy home — the grave which it offers to others, it shall refuse to thee—for seven long years shalt thou float on, and on—Earth shall fly from thee ; and the inhabitants of the earth shall reject thy fellowship—Thou shalt look on forms that thou hast loved, and hearken to tones which have been dear to thee—Thou shalt look and listen, and it shall avail thee nothing.’ ”

“A hoarse laugh from the assembled crowd followed closely on the awful words; and, ere the discordant mirth had wholly subsided, he who held me strode yet nearer to the edge of the dark rock. Instinctively I closed my eyes: a sickness as of death came over me: there was another yell of fiendish joy—another hellish mockery of mirth—a sudden fall—a loud splash—and I was floating like a corse upon the waters.—

“Oh! the agony of that moment! I writhed—I struggled—I strove to wrench away the bonds which bound my arms—But, at every heave of my tortured body, at every spasm of my fettered strength, I only sank deeper into the wave; and as I rose again exhausted and panting to the surface, I threw back the salt water from my mouth and nostrils in nauseous streams.

“As the breeze swept over me, I caught the breath of flowers, the scents of earth! But I heard also the clattering hoof-strokes of the demon train who had borne me to the coast rapidly returning to the city. My heart swelled

almost to bursting ; and, had not my brain been scorched, I could have wept. I looked up ; the gray twilight was deepening around me—Wretch as I was, this alone was wanting to complete my misery !

“ Night was gathering in the sky, the long, dark, fearful night ; and I turned my eyes despairingly on either side. In one direction the tall rock from which I had been hurled rose bleak and frowning, while the waters chafed and belied at its base ; and the light spray fell back, far across the waves, like rain. As I gazed, distant and twinkling lights appeared in many a chasm, and I knew that they betokened the habitations of men. I could see in my mind’s eye the narrow hearth of the fisherman, peopled by his children and their mother ; and again I buffeted the waters, and felt half a maniac as I struggled with my bonds.

“ The night thickened around me, and the murky clouds gathered like the sable wings of the angel Asrael ; not a star was in the sky, and the moon looked not upon the earth, nor across the sea, where I lay like a log upon the waters.

The wind freshened ; and I felt that I was rapidly borne away from the land. There was a mightier heaving in the billows, and a deeper murmur from the depths of ocean ; while the sea-birds shrieked out as they dipped for an instant their ill-omened bosoms in the wave, and then pursued their way to their rocky resting-places till the morrow. Alas ! I had no resting-place ! I prayed to the Prophet that I might die ; but, from the depths of his amaranth bowers, he heard me not ; and I lived on.

“ And now a fresh agony grew upon me. The folds of my turban became weighty as the moisture penetrated even to my hair-roots ; and I was bowed back heavily into the waters.

“ Bashustun — on my head be it, Effendim ! You have never dreamt of hours so long as those of that dark weary night ; with its shrill winds, its angry sky, and its deep dreamy solitude. Ere morning dawned I had writhed so violently in my bonds that the blood gushed from my ears and nostrils, and trickled down my beard. I was weak and spiritless ; and at length I wept like a child. They were the first tears of my

manhood, and they were wrung from my heart in agony and bitterness.

“As the light broke, a huge sea swept over me ; and though but a moment before I had prayed for death, yet now I panted and struggled with the suffocating element, and felt almost joy when the mighty billow was overpast.

“The day came—the glorious day ! Wreaths of clouds, beautiful in their blended tints of gold and gray, floated in the east, like heralds of the rising sun. Again I heard the shrill shriek of the water-fowl, and saw the gleaming wings of the sea-gull and the cormorant as they flew over my head. Sounds of unearthly music rose from the ocean-cells, like the welcome of the water-gods to the daylight ; whispers swept along the wave as the breeze rippled it ; and the golden tints of the morning sky danced in brightness on the waters. Crowds of flying fish darted high into the air, and fell back one by one as the moisture dried upon their wings. Many a shark in pursuit of prey darted along so close beside me as to heave the very billow by which I was upborne, yet it saw me not. I was

plunged deep, deep into the waters by the heavy fin-stroke of the mighty whale as it passed me by; and the fairy nautilus hoisted its transparent sail, and guided its tiny bark fearlessly within my very grasp.

“ Hunger came upon me, and thirst ; and the sun, as it rose in the heavens, beat maddeningly upon my uncovered face. I had prayed for day-light: I had watched and panted for it throughout the long, long night, and it had come at length, only to bring with it an accession of misery, for I sickened beneath the fierce heat and the blinding light.

“ During the darkness I had drifted far out to sea ; the wilderness of waters was around me : not a vestige of man, nor of that earth which is his inheritance, was left to cheat me into hope. The spectral albatross clave the air with white and motionless wing, and cast its long, dark, solitary shadow far across the wave.

“ Then came evening, with its softened light and its subdued breeze ; and my aching eyes were cooled by its approach ; though I shuddered as I remembered that night would follow in its train.

“ Well might I shudder with prophetic dread ; for *that* night taught me that I was never, during my ocean-pilgrimage, to close my eyes in sleep ! I spent it like the last ; at times I was furious, and struggled and shrieked in my despair ; and at others I lay bleeding, exhausted, and almost reckless, on my billowy bed.

“ Years passed over me thus, chequered only by an occasional accession of misery, by storm, and hurricane, and tempest. Famine and thirst were still gnawing at my heart, and yet I could not die——”

CHAPTER XI.

THE ARAB STEED—*continued.*

“ Men say that I am mad ; and it may well be so—it was in truth a maddening thing to lie year after year in my helplessness, storm-worn, sleepless, hopeless—Ishallah ! there is another world for the True Believer, where the tempest-breath and the billow will never come—”

“ And did you still live on alone ? ” demanded Ildji Rezà, interested despite himself in the strange tale of the maniac ; “ Had you no companion in misery ? no occupation to beguile the dreary days ? ”

“ Companion ! ” echoed the Dervish, with a wild laugh : “ What companion would you have given to me ? not a mortal—no ! no ! —he could

have held no communion with me—I was no longer an inhabitant of earth, but a loathed and unnatural being, living a charmed life—breathing upon an element which would have brought death to my fellow-men—fore-doomed to years of unholy existence—where could I hope to find a companion? Occupation!" he pursued still more earnestly; "Can you not guess my occupation? I learnt to note the hours by the appearance of the sunbeams on the water, or the position of the stars; and I collected the ashes of madness, which, after smouldering for a time, at length burst into a flame, and seared my brain.

"At times I lay quietly upon the surface of the ocean, and, fixing my eye upon a particular wave afar off, I watched its progress, and laughed long and loudly when at length it broke over me; and at others I shrieked an echo to the shrill cry of the sea-fowl, and felt a cunning exultation as I found how fully I had caught the discordant note; and heard the bird, mocked into a belief that it was the call of one of his own species, answer in his turn.

“ But not always did I thus sport with my unhallowed wretchedness ; these were my hours of revel, and the startled spirit soon shrank back into itself—into its idiot vanity or its maddening despair !

“ How often, during these miserable years, did I look on land : aye, even watched the fisherman while he drew his nets ; and caught the sound of laughter as it came shrilly along the waves ;—then, even although I felt the impotence of my efforts, I again strove to burst my bonds—panted—yelled in the agony of my helplessness, as I sank into deep water ; and writhed like a baited animal when I once more rose to the surface.

“ All day I have floated past the land ; at times dashed furiously against projecting points of rock, and then cast back, maimed and bleeding, on the retiring breakers ; at others gliding slowly and smoothly along a smiling shore ; breathing the breath of flowers, cooled by the long shadows of stately trees, listening to the lowing of cattle, the song of birds, the sounds of

music, the voice of children — unseen, unheard, unpitied !

“ Thus sped my days : my nights brought no mental rest, for sleep was denied to me—Effen-dim, Min Allah — Heaven forbid !—that you should ever know how the brain grows crazed under the unwinking watchfulness of years !—the long, long wakefulness which knows no rest—the vigil that is unbroken ! And yet I longed for night; for its darkness, weary and withering as it was, offered me at least a respite from the tedious monotony of the ocean and the burning fury of the sun. Sometimes, too, the pale moon rode high in heaven, and the sea gleamed like a sheet of molten silver, while I lay there, the only dark speck to mar the glory of the scene.

“ On such nights I was ever sad and resigned to my destiny ; I did not struggle—I did not shriek—I lay calmly, and wept like an infant ; or, after gazing awhile on the fair moon, I fixed on a bright star above my head, and fancied a world of happiness for Comladeve and myself in such a sphere of light ; and, as I gazed, the

hour of my soul would stand upon the vapour that swept across the moon; and point to the star on which I loved to look; and lo! it changed; and I saw the diamond key that opens the portal of the Prophet's paradise; while she beckoned me to a death of blessedness which I could not die! That vision brought madness with it—and then I held discourse with the sky, and with the sea, and again played the maniac.

“One evening, after a day of fierce heat, as I lay inhaling with avidity the cool breeze which swept along the wave, and feathered it with its refreshing breath, a distant object caught my eye, and I gazed upon it with delirious joy! Nearer it came in its pride: the dark mass assumed a form: it was—it was a ship! Ay! on she came, with her sails set, and her bowsprit bending at intervals even into the very ripple as the fresh breeze sped her on. I could see her tall masts, her white canvass, her complicated cordage; and, more than all, I could see many of her crew—men! my fellow men! my brothers!

“They came not from my own land, for their

unturbaned heads were bare, and the wind played among their long and curling locks—they were not of my own faith, for the Christian symbol streamed from the mast of the stately ship—but what cared I for this? They would save me; I should once more be restored to the world, to Comladeve, and to myself. Can you not believe that my joy was maddening?

“One among them stood like the spirit of the huge ship; and looked and spoke with the glance and the tone of pride. In the intervals of my struggles and of my cries, I watched him narrowly; once I thought that he pointed towards me, and my heart leaped with transport; but he turned suddenly away, and I saw him no more. Still, however, the full and lordly voice met my ear—alas! had I known the import of the words it uttered, the pealing of the midnight thunder had been more welcome.

“As I strained my eyes to look on the gallant ship, her sails shivered for an instant in the wind; I heard the myriad ropes beat heavily against the deck, as if cast down suddenly from many hands; and, ere I could draw another breath,

the vast canvass once more opened to the breeze ; and away flew the swift vessel like a mighty bird, and left me writhing and wretched — an alien, and an outcast !

“ How I watched that ship as she receded ! The figures on her deck became less and less perceptible, and soon totally disappeared ; ere long, masts, and sails, and cordage grew into one confused but wondrous mass ; and, finally, she dwindled to a mere speck upon the ocean.

“ Yet still I watched her — Allah ! how my eyes grew to that fading object as it slowly melted into thin air in the distance ! I hoped no longer ; but I had looked on *men*, and listened to the human voice ; and when even the dark speck utterly disappeared in the horizon, I buffeted the waves anew, and exhausted my strength in struggles with my unyielding bonds.

“ When the light came again, I searched around, as though I could yet look upon the glorious vision — but I saw it no more. I lived upon the memory of that ship for months. I could have described her, as though she had been still before my eyes. I remembered every look

and gesture of the proud spirit who governed her. I saw once more the graceful bound with which, after the temporary check, she again darted on her way — it was inscribed upon my heart and in my brain!"

The maniac paused ; and, grasping his broad forehead with his bony hands, seemed as though he sought to still the pang his vision had called up ; while Ildji Rezà sat beside him, marvelling how great a share memory could claim of a narrative in which madness was blent with suffering. Wild as it was, there was yet a connecting principle in the tale to which he had been listening, that seemed too mighty an effort for a mind shattered like that of the wretched object on whom he looked ; and the young man remembered that, ere the lamp of life is extinguished, its flame sometimes lights up for a short period the long-vacated sepulchre of the brain ; and thus he remained silently beside the Dervish, awaiting, with the reverence which is ever paid to madness by his countrymen, the termination of a recital which was evidently exhausting the strength of the narrator.

“Ekhi kateti—there is something; something that we neither see nor understand, Khawaji;” at length pursued the maniac; “upon our path, in the air we breathe, about, above, and around us—I was the prey of that power, be it what it may—I am so still—there are moments when I am mad—mad!—when the subtle enemy has drunk up the juices of my being, withered the marrow of my bones, and turned the stream of my blood to fire—but to-day the clasp is slackened from my heart—the demon sleeps—and I am again one of those to whom the world was given as a heritage. Yet I am not always so—and, least of all, when I was floating over that endless, endless sea. Do you dream that I saw none but pleasant scenes while I rode the wave, and mated with monsters? Ai, ai—woe is me! You are young, and the world has used you gently—you are strong, and your limbs have never writhed in bonds. You!” and he laughed the shrill mocking laugh of frenzy; “how can *you* guess at all I saw when the whirlwind and the tempest had done their work? Often, after a night of storm, did a pale bloated

corse pass close beside me ; the widely-opened eyes glaring, glazed, and ghastly, upon mine, soulless and sightless ; the lips parted as if in the death agony ; and the work of corruption begun. Horrible ! most horrible ! And yet, Wallah billah—by the Prophet ! this was but the natural effect of an element on which man might not live, save by demoniac means ; and I only loathed myself the more, as the foul corse was borne beyond my ken, that my lot was not even as that of him who had perished in the deep waters. *He*, at least, had buffeted the billows with unshackled limbs — had striven manfully with the fate which threatened him — and, when the bitter agony was overpast, had *died*. I had been bound ; had striven—struggled—suffocated —suffered all the pangs, the awfulness of dissolution, and yet lived. The tide-wave bore away its dead, and I envied the cold and loathsome corse !

“ But my cup of agony had not yet overflowed. The sun had set gloriously, and its golden beams still glowed and glistened on the ocean-wave, when again my ear was filled with

sounds which had long been strangers to it—
sounds of mirth and music—and, like a thing of
light, a gay bark swept gracefully along, with a
gilded crescent at her mast. Yes—she came
from my own land! She came to bring me life
and happiness! There were revellers on the
deck of that fair ship; her silken sails were
looped with flowers; and silver vases, filled with
perfumed incense, were shedding their costly
breath upon the air; I heard the shrill tones of
the fife, the ringing notes of the zebec, and the
clangour of the martial cymbal—for a while
I spoke not—stirred not—my gaze was riveted
on one bright form, which moved like a spirit of
beauty among the revellers. Misery, madness,
famine, had failed to blot *that* image from the
records of my brain—I gazed like one who
would exhaust himself in a long, last look, for I
felt that it was Comladeve—she whom I had
loved, whom I had almost won. Yes, *she was*
there! Her long hair was floating to the breeze;
her eyes were flashing like meteors; her white
arms were bare, and gleamed like sea-foam; she
was dancing on that vessel's deck, to the sound of
the clashing cymbals!

“ Now, indeed, I writhed and struggled to free my limbs from the bonds which fettered them ; with the violence of my frantic efforts, I sank deep into the waters, and the waves closed above my head ; but it was only for a while ; and ere long I rose again, panting and suffocating, to the surface. As my breath returned, I strove to speak, to utter the name of my beloved, to call on Comladeve to succour and to save me ; but I gave voice only to a shrill scream, like those of the aquatic fowl whose cries I had mocked in my madness—speech had departed from me !

“ Vain were it for me to tell you all — Allah kerim — Allah is merciful — I was close beside the vessel, and they saw me not. I shrieked aloud in my agony, but they did not heed me. As the bark swept along, the tide carried me forward in its wake ; and when the moon rose, and the breeze freshened, I saw Comladeve lean pensively over the vessel’s side ; and, as she raised her eye to heaven, a tear fell from it—She stood not long alone ; a tall figure approached her ; a jewelled crescent glittered in his turban, and

there were gems in the hilt of the handjan
girdle. As he reached her side, he mur-
a few words in her ear ; he breathed them
and fondly, but *I* heard them, whispered
they were ! In an instant his arm encircle-
and her head rested tenderly upon his sh-
— again he spoke, and, as the voice ceas-
looked up. Allah ! needed there this ?
not yet a wretch ? It was my brother
brother whom *I* had loved even as my ow-
— *he* was beside my betrothed bride — *he*
was twined around her waist — *his* voice
mured the words of passion — and I —
near them — borne on the same ocean — bre-
on by the same wind — lighted by the
moon — and they heeded, they heard me no

CHAPTER XII.

THE ARAB STEED — *continued.*

“ ALLAH esmarladek — Allah have you in his holy keeping ;” murmured Ildji Rezà, carried away, in spite of his reason, by the phrenzied energy of the Dervish ; “ This was indeed a grief.”

“ But I survived even that — ” laughed out the maniac ; “ and a new trouble grew upon me as I looked upon the lovers — I felt that mysterious sighing steal along the surface of the sea, which I had learnt to be the wailing of the water-gods over the coming ruin of the tempest-wrath ; murmurs arose from the ocean-depths, the awakening of the storm-breath among the billows ; the huge porpoises rolled over uneasily ;

and the hungry sharks congregated round the goodly ship. Too well I knew these signs — they foreboded death — death, Khawaji ; the sickening, struggling death of the angry billow and the shrieking wind — I knew them all, for I had watched them for years, and they had never failed !

“ For myself I feared not — what could I fear ? They did not even promise me the death for which I prayed ; but for *her* — for Comla-deve — for my soul’s idol — the water-lily over which the tide of sorrow never should have passed — for her I trembled with a dread for which the pangs of death had been a rich exchange ; and I yelled forth in my terror sounds of fearful warning. *She* heard them, and started convulsively. Like the blossom of the nigris* bent she over the murmuring billows ; but not as she was wont to look when she listened to my voice, looked she at that moment. Gardash — brother — have you ever gazed into the eye of a peri who had folded the wings of her affection upon your bosom, and forsaken the flowery paths

* Narcissus.

of pleasure for the shady home of peace? Ha! ha! she looked, down, down, deep into the heaving sea — not with love — not with tenderness — not with trust — it was wild, maddening, phrensic terror that gave a fierce light to her eye, and threw a shadow over her pale brow: anxiously she searched among the billows for the fearful creature which had uttered a sound so dread; but though her gaze seemed fixed on my very brow, she saw me not; and, after a while, she again raised her bright looks to the evening sky.

“ *She* looked calmly on an horizon which to me was fraught with terrible warning; dark clouds were flitting rapidly over the face of the heavens, and congregating in one dense mass, so black and heavy that it seemed to oppress my breathing; the moon had risen, not in beauty, but red as blood; while the lower fringes of the huge black cloud caught the reflection, and flung back far upon the waves their ensanguined shadow. At intervals, a fiery vapour played in fearful light round the gilded crescent at the mast of the doomed ship, and ran along it from point to

134 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

point — then came a deep hollow peal, which was commenced by the dark cloud, and echoed from every cave of ocean ; and again the deep waters swelled and heaved in their might, like the fettered limbs of a giant ; though the surface of the sea was yet calm, and the vessel rode as smoothly as though it had been gliding over the bosom of a lake.

“ But the storm came at length : a sudden flash struck on the crescent once more, and ran down the mast, clasping it round and round like a fiery girdle, cast by some avenging spirit from his loins — the huge cloud parted in twain—and the storm-god howled forth his summons to the tempest ! Instantly was it answered—the giant billows burst their bonds at once, and rose high into the air, crowned with foam.

“ Allah ! 'tis a rare sight to see the fury of the waves when they are lashed to madness by the storm-wind — when the surf flies high against the heavens, as though it mocked the vapours drifting over head — and the sea opens wide its yawning sepulchres, and gapes for the dead who are so soon to fill them ! But when

these are the young, the beautiful, the beloved — the treasured of your spirit, the cherished of your soul — Ha ! ha ! ha ! can you not feel the wild delirium, the bitter excitation, the maddening impulse of the conflict ?

“ I saw the light ship tossed like a ball against the sky, and then thrown back into the deep trough of the sea, like a stricken bird. Again I saw it raised on high until the holy crescent — the symbol of the Prophet — seemed to have grown into the dark, threatening, mysterious cloud, and I *felt* it again fall back ; for, as it came, a portion of its rent mast fell over the side, and struck me heavily as it touched the waves — down I sank — down — down — struggling with that mighty mass of ruin, until it again rose buoyantly to the surface, carrying me with it once more above the billows.

“ The ship and her proud crew had parted for ever — fragments of the wreck were riding on the foaming waters — I caught the breath of the scattered incense ; and flowers, and costly turbans floated past me, as I panted to regain my breath. What cared I for these gauds ?

They were of the world, and to me they were bosh — nothing. I thought only, looked only, for Comladeve — and I saw her ! Her dark hair floated like a cloud upon the wave which bore her up — her veil had escaped, and her beloved countenance was revealed in the moonlight — she was within my reach, and my arms were pinioned — I could not grasp her !

“ I uttered one cry in my agony ; and then, with frantic violence, I hurled myself against a portion of the wreck. La illaha illallah — there is but one Allah ! the effort, the struggle, the attempt to brave the death which had so long evaded me, brought partial freedom — I had burst my bonds ! For a moment I could but raise my arms high into the air, strike the palms of my spread hands forcibly together, and scream out a withering shriek of half-maddened delight — but soon came the remembrance of Comladeve — she was already carried far, far beyond my reach — but what was space ? labour ? time ? I was free ! — free ! I cast my heavy turban from my head ; I parted the waves with a powerful stroke, and I gained rapidly upon my mistress — Nearer !

nearer! — I grasped her mantle — I drew her forcibly towards me — her pale cheek touched my hand — my breath was in her hair — one more effort — one more — and I should hold her to my heart — I, who for long years had been *alone* — alone, upon the waste of waters — one more effort, and she would be mine. Ajaib — wonderful! my Comladeve — the blossom of my soul! I made it — I strove to beat back a mighty billow, but it overwhelmed me — a huge fragment of the wreck passed over us, and I lost my hold — Comladeve was gone — gone for ever!" —

A wild shriek broke from the lips of the Dervish as he buried his head upon his knees, and cowered under the vision which his own distempered fancy had conjured up; while Ildji Rezà, excited beyond all power of forbearance, sprang to his feet, and hurriedly whispered: "Oghour ola — Heaven speed you —but tell me, what more? what more?"

"Bana bak — look at me :" said the wretched man ; " can you not read the characters that the foul fiend burnt into my brow when he fled

howling before the fury of my despair? We met face to face—there—on the wild waves just subsiding after the tempest—we met, and struggled as demons only struggle—we wrestled together—but I shouted aloud the name of the Prophet; and as he cowered before me, he grasped my brain, and seared it with his fiery touch.

“ After this I slept—ay, slept! I had dreams too—dreams of sunshine, and birds, and flowers, and cool green leaves, and gushing streams; and I wandered among them with Comladeve—but at length I awoke—awoke to find myself stretched along the earth! The sea was near me, but the tide did not touch me where I lay; bright shells were scattered along the strand, and the morning sun was glittering gaily on the waters. I beat the earth with my hand, and the blood flowed from it—I rose to my feet; the dark rocks heaved under my weight, and I staggered, and almost fell; *but I felt the earth!* I was once more like my fellow men—and I crawled along amid the high grass, and the painted flowers, till I found that which

I sought—it was not the houri of Paradise—it was not the rose-garden of Nishapor—it was a human being; a creature of my own kind—a holy man—a santon of the desert. Mashallah! how I yelled forth my joy when I saw him leaning upon his staff; but he repulsed me with scorn and loathing—he—the first human being whom I had approached for years—Lahnet be Sheitan—Curse on the devil! he struck me with his staff—spurned me with his foot—and turned away to tell his chaplet, while I fainted with famine.

“ Khawaji, my soul is sick. A light has flickered to-day about my brain which had been long put out. They say that I am holy, for I can pierce my side and my breast with sharp weapons, and torture my limbs with searing iron, and nipping bonds—they know not that the fire and the knife had done their work ere they folded the khirkheh of a Dervish about me, and gave me a place in the Tekiè. But all is nearly ended: the solid earth reels before my eyes, and the daylight grows dim and dusky—yet the film has passed from my soul—I have

been called Ibn Sallah—the Son of Prayer—none knew the curses which had withered me for years! And to-day — now — come nearer to me, stranger though you be, to-day I *can* pray — the cry of my spirit is no longer vrás, vrás — kill, kill! but I say to you, Allah esmarladek — Allah take you into his holy keeping, for the bitterness of life is almost past.”

“ Allah buyûk der — Allah is great !” said Ildji Rezà ; “ rouse yourself, and all will yet be well ; but if you fold your feet upon the carpet of despair, Monker and Nakir will soon seat themselves upon its border, and the shadow of their dark wings will obscure your soul.”

“ The mountain of El Caf is high, and encloses the world ;” replied the dying man ; “ but it cannot shut out Asraël the Destroyer. The bridge of Al Sirat is steep and narrow : the footing is but a hair’s breadth, yet it must be trodden by every True Believer who would reach Paradise. I am content—I do not die the howling maniac that I have lately lived ; I see my wretchedness, I feel my desolation—Khawaji, pass on, and leave me ; Allah kerim —

Allah is merciful ! your charity has reconciled me with my kind, and I shall go in peace."

" Nay, not so ;" commenced Ildji Rezà, as a swift but stealthy step approached the tomb-house, and the Bectachy passed the threshold ; " chance has flung us together on the way-side of life, and I will not forsake you in your extremity : Min Allah—Heaven forbid !"

" Kim boo—who is that ?" demanded the new comer hastily, as he stopped beside the son of Yezid ; " Wallah ! this is no time, Ildji Rezà, to play the nurse, when you should be under your father's roof, to answer to the voices of those who call you—Away then with the speed of the simorg ;* you are as yet unsuspected ; delay, and Bashustun—on my head be it, if some babbling fool do not whisper somewhat of the tale ere noon."

Ildji Rezà glanced towards the dying Dervish ; nature had exhausted herself in the effort which he had made to retrace the troubled vision of the past ; and life was ebbing fast.

* The roe.

Man's care could avail no longer; and with a deep-breathed “Aghour ola — Heaven speed you!” he turned away, and prepared to quit the tomb.

“Affiet ollah—much pleasure attend you:” smiled the Bectachy; “but forget not, young man, that I cannot be ever upon your path with a strong grasp and a skin of Cyprus wine. Be wary, therefore; and the Prophet be propitious to your prayers.”

“And this poor sufferer?” said the son of Yezid, pointing towards the dying wretch, who had now flung himself along the cold pavement of the tomb: “you will not leave him in his misery?”

“Away—I will abide here while he needs me:” was the reply; “I shall not be long delayed.”

And without further parley, Ildji Rezà walked forth into the clear calm air of morning, with the feeling of one who has awakened from a horrid dream.

The breath of the lemon trees was flooding the atmosphere with perfume, and the scented

dews were dropping from the branches beneath which he passed. The incense, offered up by Nature to the Eternal, was ascending on all sides ; and the glorious sun, the visible presence of the Deity, was calling into life all animate objects, gilding the leaves and the river-ripple, and shedding warmth, and brightness, and beauty over the whole creation.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ARAB STEED—*continued.*

IN the city all was already astir. The lowing of the camels, and the barking of the watchdogs of the Meidan ; the shouting of the slaves at the caravanseraïs, and the cry of the muezzin from the minaret of the Great Mosque; all proclaimed that the sun had risen; and many a pious Musselmaun was on his way towards the stately temple which was built by Heraclius, in honour of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, but which it is now death to any Christian to enter.

Ildji Rezà walked swiftly through the streets; and stepping over the two slaves who were yet lying sleeping in the outer hall of his father's

house, hastened to his own apartment. When he had closed the door, and flung himself down upon the heaped-up cushions which his attendants had prepared for his repose, he began to review more leisurely the events of the past night ; and eager as he was once more to sun himself in the eyes of the beautiful Delsaïsè, he could not conceal from his own reason that all future attempts to invade the garden pavilion must prove abortive as well as perilous, when the vigilance of the Bey's household had been once aroused. Nor could he wholly divest himself of a feeling of extreme and anxious terror, as he remembered that suspicion might have attached itself to his fair and gentle mistress ; and that although he had individually escaped the penalty of his rash adventure, it might be visited in tenfold severity upon her !

On—on—progressed thought ; one dark memory linking itself to another, and forming a bitter chain of wretchedness. The Toorkoman — the steed — the mahâk — the deadly vow by which he was fettered—that vow from which there was no appeal, and no release — by which

Delsaïsè would be sacrificed ; and he himself die ten thousand deaths ! .

To look back upon the past was madness ; and with the natural buoyancy of youth, he turned after awhile to the future ; and began to devise new stratagems, which were each discarded in turn as unfeasible, or likely to be unproductive of success, until he at length resolved to trust to his felech ; and after having swallowed his coffee, to repair to the hammām, and take advantage of any good fortune or lucky chance that might betide him.

Having decided on this very simple mode of action, Ildji Rezà, after a short rest, rose from his couch, and having smoked a chibouque, hastened to the shop of the Armenian barber who was wont to operate upon the heads and chins of all the handsome youths of Damascus.

“ Khosh geldin, Effendim ;” said the operator, as Ildji Rezà entered the spacious paved apartment, surrounded by sofas, on which were congregated, even at this early hour, half a score of the gay young gallants of the city ; “ You are welcome, my master ; and the rather that I

last night received a packet of soap from Stam-boul, and scented oils from Smyrna, which have not yet been rubbed upon the beard of any Effendi who frequents my shop. And sooth to say, Khawaji, you have need of them, for your chin is in a disarray which would go nigh to ruin my reputation if you were to walk through the tcharchi uncombed, as you have entered here. There is news, too, in the city—the harem of Kassim Bey has been attempted: some idle mascara (*scaramouch*) with better legs than wits, was seen to leap the wall of the women's gardens; and such screeching and screaming have not been heard under that roof since it was raised; as the Aga Baba himself told me, when he came in just at sunrise, in order that I might repair the ravages of the nocturnal chase in which he had been engaged——”

“And, as usual,” laughed out Latif Effendi, throwing forth a volume of smoke in which he was nearly enveloped: “the oldest and the ugliest of the women made the uproar, while the young ones ran to strive for a parting glimpse of the intruder.”

"Hai, Hai — true, true — on my head be it :" said Ildji Rezà, forcing a mirth which he was far from feeling ; " What is written, is written ; and the lovely are never the merciless. But who was the Delhibashi—the prince of madmen—who attempted so rash an exploit ?"

" Some say it was Ashref the Numidian melon-merchant, who had become enamoured of the negress Giadilla, the dusky handmaiden of that queen-lily, the fair Delsaïsè, the Bey's only child ;" again broke in the waggish Latif ; " but others affirm that it was none other than our worthy host here, Apic Ouglou, who had dreamt a dream of the young Hanoum Effendi herself, while beating up the suds destined to lave the thick head of the Cadi ; (may his beard prosper !) and who——"

" Me ? Asteferallah ! Me ? " exclaimed the alarmed barber : " Heaven forbid ! Is it for me to dream dreams of a Bey's daughter, and to put my neck into the bowstring ? St. George, St. Nicholas, and St. Lawrence preserve me from such mad presumption !"

A peal of low chuckling laughter followed

close on the barber's deprecatory exclamation ; while, withdrawing his turban, Ildji Rezà seated himself, and ran his fingers complacently through his luxuriant and glossy beard.

"Guzel, pek guzel !" said the Armenian admiringly, as he also passed his hand over it ; "handsome, very handsome ! Bashustun — on my head be it, there are not half a dozen such beards as this in Damascus !"

"Say half a hundred, Apic, my friend, say half a hundred ;" smiled Latif Effendi ; "or you will lose your practice, seeing that we are all more or less touched by your decision ! for myself I care not ; I am beyond your malice—but Sarim the Bynbashi, Benezer the Saraf, and Mazzouk the Khoja of His Excellency Aslan Pasha, will one and all feel themselves aggrieved : as I hear that they have been wickedly called sakal-siz (no-beards) by the idle boys of the city : and that they have not rejoiced in the name."

"Min Allah — Heaven forbid that I should anger the Effendis by a light word ;" said the mild Armenian ; "but even as the Yuzbashi (the captain of a hundred) loves to handle a

good weapon, so do I joy to comb out a fine beard."

As the barber spoke he threw around Ildji Rezà a fringed and embroidered napkin, and prepared his razors, by trying their temper on the palm of his hand ; and while he was thus engaged, one of the itinerant perfume-merchants so common in the East, an old and withered woman, whose feeble steps were supported by a staff, stopped on the threshold, and invited the Effendis to examine her wares.

"No, no ; see you not that their excellencies are engaged ?" said the Armenian, motioning her away ; " pass on ; we need you not !"

" Sen ektiar der—you are the master ;" replied the old crone quietly ; " but surely these handsome gallants must want something to send to the young beauties whom they worship ; and you will not spoil my market, I trust, Apic Oglou, you whom I have known for so many years, and to whom I have not been quite useless."

" Evallah — to be sure, to be sure :" hastily interposed the barber ; " I owe you no ill-will,

Satira ; but to-day you will lose your time by loitering at my threshold."

" Satira !" exclaimed Ildji Rezà anxiously : " did you call her Satira ? Is she the worthy woman who has been thrice before the Cadi, and once bastinadoed, for introducing into the hidden chambers of the harem certain missives, where words of passion were inscribed with gold dust upon the leaves of roses ? Is she——"

" It is myself, Effendimou, my master ;" said the old woman, nodding her veiled head, and turning her dim eyes towards the enquirer, as she advanced into the apartment, and deposited her essence-case on the lip of the marble fountain ; " It is myself, Khatoun, my darling : and, aged as I am, I care neither for the cadi nor the thong. What shall I show to the Beyzadeh ? I have dyes, and soaps, and unguents ; essences, and spices, and pastilles made of all the precious gums of Araby, and sparkling with gold-dust ; I have calams for tracing gentle words ; and all the love ballads of Hafiz, written in characters of many colours. I have amulets, and charms, and spells : bouquets of spices and garlic, to pre-

serve the young mother and her infant from the influence of the Evil Eye;* and——”

“Have you any charm to preserve us from the influence of the black and bright ones which flash upon us as we walk the bazaar, from beneath the jealous yashmacs of our young beauties?” asked Latif: “for the Evil Eye, we of Damascus fear it not; and care not though——”

“Yavash, yavash—softly, softly, Effendim;” broke in the old woman; “Allah buyûk der—let us utter no words that we have not thrice turned in the palms of our hands, lest we wish to gather them up again when it is too late.”

And a murmur of “Taib! taib! well said, well said;” from the groups around the apartment, bore testimony that the feeling of defiance towards the Evil Eye was not so common in the good city of Damascus, as Latif Effendi, in his lightness of spirit, would fain have had it believed.

“But you ask if I have spells against bright

* It is a common custom in Turkey to send these bouquets as presents to the mothers of new-born infants, who have the most perfect faith in their efficacy.

eyes, Effendimou ? Min Allah—Heaven forbid ! How should I vend my wares, and to whom, if the peris of paradise were to fold their wings, and wither into afrits ? And how should I pass away my hours, were it not that I always carry home the merchandise that I sell, and deliver with the gift the ‘Oghour ola — the Allah speed you,’ of the giver ?”

“ Mashallah ! she speaks well ;” laughed her listeners.

“ And who see I there, on the sofa beyond ?” suddenly exclaimed the crone ; “ Can it really be my lord Aboudahab himself, the light of my eyes, and the hope of my soul ? Na to ne—there it is—I sought you all yesterday, agam, and found you not ; and to-day, when I looked no longer, thinking that my lord had left the city, I encounter you here, and may do mine errand.”

“ And what errand can Satira, the discreet perfume-merchant, have with the staid and pious Aboudahab ?” shouted one of the young men : “ Speak, Effendim, what can be the business of this veiled houri with you ?”

“ Allah bilir — Allah alone knows ;” said the

handsome young Yuzbashi of the Pasha's guard, who had been thus unceremoniously addressed ; endeavouring, as he spoke, to assume an expression of unconcern, which, however, sat but awkwardly upon him : " Have you yet to learn that she is the mother of lies, and that she is as likely to hatch one for me as for any other of this goodly company ? Mashallah, the wonder is neither a plague nor an earthquake."

" Bakalum—we shall see ;" was the laughing rejoinder ; " Say your errand boldly, Satira, my soul, for you find that the brave Captain defies you."

" Yok, yok—no, no :" persisted the old woman : " The Yuzbashi jests, for he has more discretion than to make the brow of a pretty hanoum wear the tint of the Prophet's banner. Bak, Effendim—see, sir ;" she pursued, taking from her girdle a delicate roll of parchment, fastened with a lock of silky hair ; " does this deserve no better welcome from the Yuzbashi Aboudahab than foul words, and the shame that is worse than words ? Amān — mercy ! but I looked for other coin when I ran the risk of

the lash, to convey this written violet to his own hands."

"Peace, peace, Satira, jaquir benum — my guardian angel;" exclaimed the young soldier, forgetting his confusion in his eagerness to obtain possession of the billet doux; and drawing forth at the same time his embroidered purse; "I will ransom the prize bravely: would that I could pay every word with a piece of gold, I should not grudge the price!"

And regardless of the merriment around him, the delighted lover thrust a handful of silver coins into the ready palm of the old crone; and hastened to detach the bright tress which bound up the scroll.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ARAB STEED—*continued.*

Ildji Rezà had been no inattentive spectator of the scene ; and when the decrepid messenger of love had transferred the money with a low chuckling laugh to the bag which she carried in her girdle, he disengaged himself from the hands of the Armenian, and proceeded to pour upon his beard the contents of one of the essence-bottles.

“ Alhemdullilah—praises be to the Prophet !” muttered Satira, as she marked the reckless profusion of the son of Yezid : “ what can he have to ask of me ! ekhi kateti—there is something —What a Beyzadeh is this, who empties at one effort as much perfume as he must pay with a

broad piece of gold ! I shall have to run my old neck into the bowstring for this!"

Then, affecting not to remark his occupation, she turned towards one of the groups, and demanded : " What can I do for your excellencies ? I have charms for all evils—beng and hashish * for the sleepless, perfumes for the luxurious, and enamelled boudakas † for the harem. Ne apalum—what can I do ?"

" You may give *me* some beng, kizem, my daughter ;" said Mansoor Aga, the dull-witted Saraf of the Pashalik, as he flung down a piece of money ; " 'tis the best charm I know against all the ills of life — better even than the sherbet of the Franks, for it leaves no head-ache behind it."

" Attar-gul for me, mother," said Latif Efendi : " unless, indeed, you have another love-missive to dispose of, and then I am willing to become a purchaser ; though, for a priestess of Aniran,‡ methinks you are somewhat dull in your office."

" Ay, ay, love-tokens are the raz kallah —

* Narcotics.

† Pipe-bowls.

‡ Hymen.

the daily bread, of you gay young Effendis ; you never weary of them. But is it the handsome son of Beamrillah the jeweller, who asks *me* for such ware ? Ai, ai, there is no truth left within the barrier of El Caf !”

“ Wallah ! it is well said :” exclaimed Ildji Rezà, as he took up a packet of the powder of the sweet-scented violet, and a small box of the paste of the white lily, a delicate and costly preparation for the hands : “ and now, count up my debt, good mother, and let me cancel it.”

“ Allah moutèyemmin èilèyè agam—Allah grant that it be of good omen to you, my lord :” said the old woman, “ for it will cost you some coin. Bè hey ?—what is this ? a whole bottle of essence, of which every drop is worth——”

“ Listen, mother ;” said Ildji Rezà in a low voice ; “ I am not yet content with my purchase. I covet all your wares ; but I will not purchase them here. Meet me an hour hence in the great cemetery ; and meanwhile, here is what will supply you with a pillauf at your mid-day meal ;” and he flung into her basket a large gold coin which she greedily secured.

“ Said my lord one hour hence.”

“ I did.”

“ Pek ahi—it is well. I will be there.”

This short dialogue did not pass unobserved ; and the jests were numerous with which Ildji Rezà had to contend ere he quitted the shaving-room of the Armenian barber. But his heart was too deeply engaged for him to heed them ; and a gibe was yet upon the lips of the incorrigible Latif when he took leave of the laughing company, and bent his way towards the cemetery of the city.

There, among the tall cypresses, seated upon a grave, and leaning against the turban-crested headstone, he found the old woman already awaiting him. Her basket and essence-case were beside her, and she was quietly smoking her chibouque ; which, however, as soon as he approached, she hastily put away in order to rearrange her yashmac.

“ What is written, is written ;” she said as he stopped beside her ; “ It requires no calam to inscribe the truth on the surface of my understanding—Son of Yezid, you are in love ; and

you want me to peril life and limb in your cause."

"Min Allah — Heaven forbid ! I have not such desperate visions ;" exclaimed the young man gaily ; " You, Satira, khatoun, have trodden the harem-floor too often with a feather from the bul-bul's throat in your keeping, to run much risk of mischief in obliging me. You have been young in your time, mother, and perhaps beautiful ; and now——"

" And what now ?" hastily broke in the aged woman : " now, you would tell me that I am old, and wrinkled, and palsied ; and that such as I am are not numbered among the houri—I know it — I know it — I require no assurance that I am changed from the days when a smile from my lip made the crown of the loved one's head touch the cupola of heaven. Son of Yezid, were it not so, I should not be here and thus. Then the gold of Sumatra was on my neck, and the diamonds of the farthest East upon my brow—the cashemires of Thibet bound a waist as slender as the cypress ; and the silks of Bithuania were folded about a form as graceful as that of the simorg—

veils of muslin, as fine as the gossamer that flits across the setting sun, shielded my face from the beam that would have marred its beauty—a face that looked like the moon at its full, in the season when the vines are leafless, and the stars hold their place about her silver throne, almost as radiant as herself—now, my yashmac is coarse and heavy, the gold and the gems have passed away; I smile; but it is in bitterness, for no fond eye hangs upon my looks: and I fold my cloak about as lone a heart as any in Damascus. Needed there words then, Effendim, from the gay and the handsome like yourself, to remind me of the change?"

"Nay, nay, you mistook me;" interposed Ildji Rezà, as the bitter smile passed from the lip of his companion; "I would have said that none better than yourself could feel and act for me. Let us waste no more words; I love Delsaïsè Hanoum, the daughter of Kassim Bey——"

"Love who?" exclaimed the essence-merchant; "Bè hèy—What's this?—Would none other do for the son of Yezid the Merchant than

the only child of the fierce Kassim Bey ? Think, think, Effendim—you are too young and too gallant to offer your neck to the bowstring — I will dip my hand in no pillauf like this — Allah bilir—Allah alone knows how it might end.”

“ Have you then never heard that she was offered to me in marriage, and that I refused to bring a wife into my harem ? You look surprised, mother, but I tell you the truth. It matters not wherefore, but I have changed my humour, and now I would make her love me ere she enters the house of my father, that she may forget my past coldness.”

“ It will be no heavy task ;” said the old woman, as she gazed admiringly on the handsome youth ; “ you have but to gallop past her window, or to saunter beneath it, or, in short, to show yourself by any means in your power, and your object will be accomplished.”

“ I would do more ;” said Ildji Rezà ; “ I cannot be content with the mere eye-worship, that may be won by every handsome camel in the

city ; I would penetrate into the harem, and look upon her, and commune with her, and pour out my soul in passionate words, which should fall gently on her ear, as the leaves of the gum-cistus on the earth at twilight."

" And what furtherance seek you from me in this wild scheme ?" asked the old woman.

" The loan of a disguise. Your cloak, your veil, and your essence-box. Go to the bazar, mother, and purchase for me toys and gauds such as may fix the eye of a young beauty ; teach me the quivering tone, the unsteady step, and the cant and craft of your calling—nay, no denial — I will pay you back in gold enough to enable you to smoke the chibouque of your age in peace."

" But should my share in this mad attempt be discovered——"

" Korkma — fear not ;" said Ildji Rezà ; " I will peril neither your neck nor my own beard. What is written, is written. I have resolved on this venture, and I will not be turned from my purpose."

" Allah buyûk der !" apostrophised the es-

sence-merchant ; “ the hair grows fast upon young heads, and some one must play the barber ! I am ready, Effendim ; I will trust both to your prudence and your generosity. And now, give me gold that I may hasten to the bazar to my friend Mazzouk, the honestest Merchant who ever dropped attar-gul into an ivory box ; for I will trade for you, Agam, as for myself. Deovletin istial—may your prosperity increase ! ” she added, as Ildji Rezà placed a well-filled purse in her ready hand : “ I always love to trade with such as you ; the women, aye, even the youngest, the handsomest, and the wealthiest, will cavil with me for a dinár, and blacken my face to obtain a bargain ; while the gallants of the city are as ready with their gold as with their jests. To-morrow then, Effendim, I will return and bring to you on this very spot all that you have asked of me.”

“ It is well — farewell then till to-morrow ; ” said the young man, as he turned away.

“ Delhibashi — Prince of Madmen ! ” muttered the old woman, while she followed him with her eyes : “ He shall pay me all, *all*, ere he

risks the venture; for, if Sheitan does not aid him, he will not escape in a whole skin from Kassim Bey."

CHAPTER XV.

THE ARAB STEED — *continued.*

SLOWLY, and absorbed in thought, Ildji Rezà quitted the cemetery, and turned his steps towards his father's house. The tapestry door of the Merchant's chamber was held aside by a slave, for Yezid was about to pass out ; and the young man met him on the threshold at a moment when he would gladly have avoided all notice. But this was not to be ; for, when a greeting had passed between them, Ildji Rezà found himself invited by a grave and silent gesture to follow the Khawaji back into the apartment whence he had but a moment before been about to depart ; and, as he entered, a feeling of impatient irrita-

tion grew upon him, on perceiving upon the sofa of Yezid a couple of carefully folded parcels, covered by finely-wrought bokshas or handkerchiefs, such as are only wrapped about the most valuable merchandise.

“ Wallah billah — by the Prophet !” muttered the young man beneath his breath ; “ here has my unhappy felech led me into a discussion on the relative value of muslins and tissues, when I would have shut myself into my chamber to arrange my plans for to-morrow. But patience, Ildji Rezà, thou must fulfil thy destiny.”

The philosophy of the son of Yezid seemed indeed about to be put to the test ; for the door of the apartment was scarcely closed behind them, and the Merchant had barely reached the centre of the floor, when he pointed to the packages on the sofa, and asked in a tone of bitterness and wounded pride : “ Ildji Rezà, do you see those bokshas ? ”

“ I do.”

“ Can you guess what they contain ? ”

“ Perhaps muslins from Hindostan ; perhaps

silks from Broussa ; or, it may be, jewels from ——”

“ They contain all of these ;” interposed Yezid hastily : “ and each the most costly of its kind—and yet—listen to me, Ildji Rezà—I swear that they are more loathsome in my sight than if they were the discarded rags of some filthy Jew. They were the bridal gifts of the son of Yezid to the daughter of Kassim Bey—from the relenting lover to the neglected mistress—and you see how they have sped. The profligate heir of the poor Khawaji is no longer a fitting suitor for the only child of the haughty Bey. You have played the fool so well, Ildji Rezà, that you have transferred the motley to me, and I shall be pointed at as I walk the city streets.”

“ Now, by the soul of the Prophet !” burst forth the young man.

“ Yavash, yavash—softly, softly ;” said the Merchant in the calm accent of concentrated passion ; “ anger is unavailing, and hot words were made for women. We are no longer held worthy to dip our spoon into the same tchorba

(soup) with a noble — we have put our beards into his hand, and we have no right to complain that he has plucked them out. You now know all, Ildji Rezà, and must henceforward be content to seek a wife among the merchants of the city."

As Yezid ceased speaking, he clapped his hands, and a slave reappeared on the threshold with his slippers. Ildji Rezà was aware that the outward show of calmness which his father had maintained during their brief interview, was as deceitful as the stillness of a volcano ere the lava-flood bursts forth ; and he did not dare to detain him : while a rush of conflicting feelings rooted him for a time to the spot, and kept him motionless.

All was then over, as regarded his recognised marriage with the beautiful Delsaïsé — Should he win her by stratagem, he must fly with her to another land — and it might even be — and in that thought there was madness ! — that she had been accessory to his insulting dismissal — the novelty of his affection had worn away — the mystery of his love was about to be terminated by a

marriage sanctioned by her father, and her woman-fancy, thwarted in its full flow, had degenerated into disappointed indifference. But, no, no ; this could not, *could* not be ! He remembered a thousand whispered words which had pledged her to him in every change of fortune ; and he would not believe that her pride could play the traitor to her peace.

He would trust to her affection — he *must* trust to it, not only his happiness, but his life, or she was lost to him for ever ; for he felt assured that his disguise, carefully as it might be adjusted, would soon fail to insure his safety beneath the eyes of suspicion and inquiry.

But what cared Ildji Rezà for the risk ? What was life to him, if its best principle were wanting ? He was content to abide his fate ; and, for a while, he abandoned himself to happy dreams of the sweet existence, which far, far from Damascus, and from the frown of a proud father, he would lead with Delsaisè — with the loved one, whom he would rescue from her cheerless thraldom to be the wife of his bosom, and the idol of his heart — but suddenly a dark shadow crossed

the mirror of his mind — he remembered the Toorkoman, and all was again despair and remorse !

Thus did Ildji Rezà pass the night : sometimes wrapped in visions which could have been realised only in the paradise of Mahomet ; and at others sunk in unavailing regret, and trembling apprehension. But the morrow came at length ; and the young man, rousing himself by a violent effort, prepared to keep his adventurous appointment with the essence-merchant.

When he reached the spot where he had left Satira on the previous day, he found her already at her post ; but, as he approached, she moved silently on until she stood amid a cluster of thickly-planted trees, and beside a tomb of unusual size ; here she paused, and drawing from beneath her cloak a parcel of considerable bulk, she flung it at the feet of Ildji Rezà.

“ You are obeyed, my son : ” she said, as she deposited her essence-box on the ground beside her : “ and fear not, for though the garments be coarse and worn, they came not from the quarter where the khanzyr (hogs) of Jews nurse the

plague that it may scatter the True Believers before its loathsome breath. It is true that I have paid a heavier sum for them, than if I had purchased them of the dogs of Infidels ; but I preferred the pillauf of safety to the pomegranate of gold, and heeded not the price. Bak agam — look, my lord ;” she continued, as she unfolded the squalid raiment in which the hitherto fastidious Ildji Rezà was about, although not without a disgustful shudder, to envelope himself ; “ Here are an antery and schalwar which the Effendi, who sold them to me, valued at two purses, though, at length, by dint of cavil, I paid for them both with one — and here is a feridjhe (mantle) of green cloth — you will be for a time descended from our holy Prophet — see that your deeds do no dishonour to the alliance — it is somewhat short for you, of a truth ; but these capital boots of yellow morocco (scarcely soiled, by the way, save that they have been slightly discoloured by the mud of the city streets) will render that inconvenience of little account. And now, seat yourself, that I may arrange your yashmac ; the muslin is rent in

places, and it will require some skill to fold it to the best advantage. Pek ahi — very well!" she said exultingly, as she concealed the handsome face of the son of Yezid beneath the tattered veil of coarse white muslin; " But you must remember that your eyes are visible, and that no old merchant-pedlar suffers her glances to go roving far and wide, as yours are wont to do; drop your eyelids heavily over them, or you will be betrayed ere the Aga Baba has accepted your bribe, and suffered you to pass into the harem. Bear in mind too, that your feridjhe is something of the shortest; lean, therefore, upon your staff, and bend your knees; sink your head between your shoulders, and give a curve to your back; the years which can be flung off at will, may be allowed to press hard for a few hours."

Ildji Rezà listened in silence, for his heart was too full for idle colloquy; and when he was fairly invested with his new character, and that his own garments were folded and delivered to the safe keeping of his garrulous companion, he flung to her a purse, which she deemed it expedient to secure without comment, and lifting the

essence-box from the earth, and seizing the staff which she held towards him, he took leave of the old woman ; and while she seated herself on the tomb, and prepared to recruit her exhausted energies with a chibouque, he quietly passed out of the cemetery.

Not an eye turned on him in enquiry as he traversed the city streets ; his disguise and his caution were alike perfect ; and he had gained a considerable portion of self-confidence when he at length paused at the harem-door of Kassim Bey.

Well did he know that on the result of the next few hours depended his future welfare—that on the sounding of this particular chord on the mysterious instrument of fate, hung the harmony or discord of his after-life ; and he resolved to meet it manfully.

Two sharp strokes with the head of his staff brought a negro slave to the threshold, who, holding the door carefully in his hand, uttered a quick and angry enquiry as to the identity of the stranger.

“ It is me, janum—my soul ; it is me ; ” replied

the imposter boldly ; “ surely you have not forgotten me so soon, Effendim, in the fumes of my own gebeli — Bana bak — look at me, I am Satira the essence-merchant ; with a fresh cargo of perfumes for the fair Hanoums of the Bey’s harem, and a stock of the finest Salonica tobacco for my own friends. Open the door, agam, open the door, and let me pass in, for I am weary.”

“ You must rest awhile in the hall, mother, until I summon the Aga Baba ;” said the slave ; “ I am but newly arrived, and you are a stranger to me. You can unpack the tobacco while you wait.”

“ I’ain—well said :” retorted the visiter : “ it is gebeli for a Pasha, and you shall taste of the best — and for my lord the Aga Baba (may his power increase !) is not my life and all that I have at his command ? for has he not ever turned the light of his countenance upon me, and brightened my soul ?”

The concluding portion of this rhapsody was uttered with great emphasis, for the wily Ildji Rezà had remarked the stealthy entrance of the

hideous Numidian at the lower end of the hall, whence he was listening to the conversation.

“The wife of Aslan Pasha has quarrelled with the chief of her harem-guard ;” pursued the speaker, affecting to lay bare his merchandise to the admiration of the slave by whom he had been admitted : “and she swore to me by the soul of the Prophet, that if her husband loved her, her enemy should never pass another Bairam in the palace of the Pashalik, where his duties are light, and his gains heavy ; and she is one who will keep her word. ‘But where shall we find another to supply his place in Damascus ?’ she asked ; ‘one worthy to watch over the heaven-gifted beauties of Aslan Pasha’s harem ?’ ‘Fear not, fairest of the daughters of Peristan :’ answered I boldly ; ‘the Prince of Aga Babas, the most renowned of negroes, is within the reach of your excellency’s summons —the inimitable Kafoor Effendi, the trusted friend of Kassim Bey.—’”

“Kim boo — who is that ?” growled a hoarse voice, sounding like the roar of a bear from amid the underwood of a forest, as the redoubt-

able Kafoor himself came forward, attempting to appear unconscious of the compliments which had just been lavished on him ; “ Who is that ? and what does she here ?”

Ere Ildji Rezà could frame a reply, the Aga Baba had waddled across the hall, and stood beside him ; he was of immense size and height ; his head was disproportionately large, and flattened as though it had in his youth supported some overpowering weight : his eyes were large and bloodshot, and overhung by long and shaggy brows which met across his broad and bridgeless nose ; his nether lip hung low upon his chin ; and the belt which supported his scymetar was buried between two ridges of fat which girdled him with obesity.

But Ildji Rezà wasted no time on the external qualities of the Aga Baba ; as, making a low and respectful obeisance, he besought that his favour might overshadow him, and his smile bring him happiness.

“ Have I done ill, my lord ; ” he asked ; “ that before I subjected my wares to the eyes and fingers of half the city, I have brought them

here to pleasure you with their novelty ? Has the chibouque of sweet savour ceased to please ; or may I hope again to supply the boudaka of the far-farmed Kafoor Effendi from this fresh bag of the fragrant gebeli of Salonica ? Have I angered my lord, or will he condescend to mix his sherbet from these delicate cakes of preserved sugar ? Or to dip his fingers into this jar of tchalva, or his hand into this dish of kubeh ?* and the son of Yezid, moving between the Aga Baba and the attendant slave, so as quite to impede the view of the latter, extended towards the Numidian a china saucer, where, in the midst of the dainties he had mentioned, lay a purse of gold coins which were distinctly visible through the transparent muslin that contained them.

“ And why not ? ” again growled the worthy guardian of Kassim Bey’s harem, as he clutched with the same grasp the purse and the kubeh : “ Is it because our own cooks are crafty, that there should be none other such in Damascus ? ”

* Baked force-meat, wrapped in vineleaves.

Min Allah — Allah forbid ! the food is good, mother, and well flavoured ; and if you desire to dispose of your wares to the ladies of the Bey, I will myself conduct you to the harem."

Ildji Rezà's breath came quick, for although his errand appeared to speed well, there was a keen malicious expression in the large unsightly eye of the Numidian which made his pulses quiver, and redoubled his caution.

"It is strange that I have forgotten your name, mother :" followed up the formidable Aga Baba, with still encreasing scrutiny of look and manner ; "for it would seem that you and I should be well acquainted."

"My lord surely jests with his slave ;" said Ildji Rezà hurriedly ; "for how should such as he remember poor Satira the essence-merchant, save by the excess of his condescension ?"

"Hai, hai—true, true ;" was the reply ; as a low chuckling laugh escaped the functionary ; "I should have remembered you, for I saw you bastinadoed in the bazar by the Wali's officer for carrying love-tokens into the harem of Nazif the Jeweller — Bashustun — on my head be it ! but

the cow's thong did its office generously that day, mother."

" And did my lord believe that I was guilty ?" asked Ildji Rezà deprecatingly, as he slipped another purse into the palm of the Aga Baba ; " could my lord think that I was such a cast-away ?"

" Nay, nay ; I said not that you had done the deed :" was the quick reply, as the hand of the Numidian was hastily plunged amid the folds of his girdle, and then drawn back empty : " That was the Wali's affair, not mine—but we waste time ; and truly I am not sorry to see you here, mother ; for the lady Delsaisè, who has done nothing but weep for the last two days, may perhaps find amusement for a few moments in wasting the Bey's money on your toys and trumpery."

Little did the Numidian imagine the effect of his words upon the eager and impatient listener. Delsaisè wept then ! and he alone could dry her tears, for it was for him that they were shed. He would have rushed to her presence, have flung himself at her feet, and have poured out

his transport like a lava-flood before her; but again the harsh voice of the Aga Baba fell upon his ear, and he felt the necessity of caution.

" You spoke of the harem of the Pasha, mother; and of some misunderstanding which had arisen between the chief of the guard and his fair mistress the Buyûk Hanoum— Are you sure of the fact ?"

" As sure as that there are stars in heaven during a summer night. Did not the beautiful Gulzara, the rose-garden of delight, tell me the tale with her own coral-tinted lips ? And did I not in return——"

" Enough, enough, good mother; I know the rest; but think you that you have influence to procure the post for me ? If you can do it, you shall pass to and fro unquestioned : aye, even although you were the high priestess of Anirân herself. I desire to serve the Pasha : he is indolent and generous ; and so long as he can fold his feet upon the carpet of quiet, cares not who counts out the piastres of profit."

" My lord says well, and my face is blackened

before his wisdom :" replied Ildji Rezà : " so sure as I am an essence-merchant, shall Kafoor Effendi, if such be his pleasure, become the guardian of the Bey's harem."

" You will swear this ?"

" And why not ?"

" You will swear it by your father's beard ?"

" I will."

" Enough — we will talk further of this presently ; but you must not breathe a syllable of the compact under this roof."

" I shall be silent as the dead ; Evallah ! I have long learnt when to be mute, and when to trust myself with words."

" You are discreet and wise ;" said this pink of Aga Babas, as he preceded the impostor to the principal apartment of the harem : " Allah buyûk der — Allah is great, Fortune is not always overtaken by the swift ; some men gather her up under the roofs of their own dwellings, while others wander the streets, and find nothing."

" Ajaib!—wonderful !" ejaculated Ildji Rezà, as if in amazement at the wisdom of his companion.

" Wherefore," continued the Numidian with increased sententiousness ; " look not for inordinate and exceeding profit in the vending of your wares ; rapaciousness is unseemly ; the Prophet favours the right-minded, and the just are always the happy."

The son of Yezid listened, half wondering and half amused, to this tirade from the lips of an individual who had just received a bribe to betray his trust ; but chancing to glance around, he discovered that they were watched by a young slave, bound on some errand in the harem ; and he at once understood the plot of the comedy.

" Haniah Delsaisè Hanoum — Where is the lady Delsaisè ?" inquired the Aga Baba, affecting suddenly to perceive the maiden. " Here is Satira the essence-merchant, who would fain tempt her with toys and perfumes."

" Aferin — well done !" was the reply ; " you are well met, mother ; for we have scarce a pastille left in the palace ; and the wife of Timsah the mir akhor (head-groom) is the mother of a fine boy, and we have no spell against the Evil Eye to offer her."

“Leave it all to me, kizem—my daughter:” returned Ildji Rezà, dreading lest the bright-eyed damsel should detain him; “leave it all to me; prettier trinkets, choicer scents, or stronger spells I have never vended than those in my present stock.”

As he spoke, the Aga Baba put aside the fringed and embroidered screen which veiled the door of an apartment at the extremity of the inner hall or saloon in which they stood; and, with a lowly prostration, Ildji Rezà paused at the threshold.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ARAB STEED—*continued.*

THE low cushioned divan which stretched along three sides of the spacious room was of crimson velvet flowered with gold, and from the seat to the floor a rich fringe of the same costly material fell glittering in the light. The apartment was covered with a bright-coloured Persian carpet ; gilt cages, containing gaily plumed birds, were hung against the walls, and instruments of music were scattered about in every direction.

On one corner of the sofa sat the beautiful Delsaïsè ; she was as pale as a lotus under the moonbeams ; and about her waist she wore the gorgeous scarf which had been the love-gift of

Ildji Rezà. A cluster of tube-roses lay near her, but she appeared to have flung them aside in weariness of spirit. At her feet reclined the faithful Ziba, seeming scarcely less sorrowful than herself; and a pang smote on the heart of Ildji Rezà as he remarked the air of languid indifference with which his lovely mistress turned to note the entrance of a stranger; ever an event of interest in a Turkish harem.

“Here is a visitor, Aga Effendim;” said the Aga Baba; “Satira the pedlar, who is come to ease you of your gold, should your humour serve.”

“She is welcome;” was the unmoved reply.

“May your days be many, and your beauty never decrease;” commenced the impostor in a less assured tone than he had yet spoken, for the spell of her loveliness was on him: “deov-letin istiat—may you increase in prosperity; and may every wind waft to your brow the tint of the lily, and the breath of the violet.”

The lady started as the voice met her ear, for, disguised though it was, it awoke an echo in her bosom, and a bright blush mantled upon

her cheek, as she bent forward to listen more freely.

“ Are you pensive, queen of the peris? I have love-ballads wrought in threads of pure gold, on muslins fine enough to float upon the summer wind. Are you sick? I have perfumes which would recall the fainting spirit about to escape the boundary of El Caf. Have you been smitten by the Evil Eye — though that can scarcely be, when your cheek is all beauty, and your brow all light — I have charms, and spells, and amulets to overcome the visitation.”

“ Give me those! give me those!” exclaimed the fair girl eagerly; “ My heart is sad; and I would fain find a spell by which it may be lightened.”

“ Heaven grant that it be of good omen to you!” said the disguised merchant, as he advanced to the sofa, and spread his wares upon the carpet: “ For the Evil Eye, spices, and garlic, and beads, and crescents of bone avail much when properly prepared; but for a heavy heart there are other spells more simple, such as withered flowers, gathered when the sun of joy

had opened wide their petals, and preserved where no eye could see them fade.. Bak, Effen-dim—See, lady ;” and Ildji Rezà held towards her a spray of withered jasmin, bound about with a long lock of jetty hair.

“ La illaha illallah—there is but one Allah !” murmured the beautiful daughter of the Bey, as she recognized her own offering to Ildji Rezà ; and at once, with the natural penetration of woman, felt assured of his secret : “ But how, good mother, can these faded blossoms lessen my grief ?”

“ By teaching you, Sultana, that all is not dark when a cloud comes upon the sky : that when it is night in one land, the sun is shining in another ; and that when the gloom is the most dense, the brightness is oftentimes at hand.”

The Lady Delsaïsè hung eagerly upon his words ; and even Ziba was roused by a strange suspicion ; while the Aga Baba — lost in dreams of ambition, and ruling in idea the harem of Aslan Pasha with a rod of iron — forcing the women to buy his forbearance with bribes ; and wringing from the wretches who sought the favour and

protection of the Satrap and his satellites, even to their last dinar—the Aga Baba was altogether unconsciousness of the danger to which his cupidity had afforded such facilities.

“ Nay, you need not retain the charm ;” continued the son of Yezid, as, after gazing earnestly at the faded flowers, the agitated girl was about to deposit them on the cushion beside her : “ You need only press them for a moment to your lips, and the spell will be complete.”

Delsaisè obeyed, and the withered jasmin was then restored to its owner, who received it with as much fervour as though it had been a relique from the Prophet’s tomb.

“ Here is another and a more powerful charm ;” continued Ildji Rezà emphatically : “ but it can only be wrought at midnight, beside a fountain, and under the shadow of tall and leafy trees.” And he fixed his eyes earnestly on the maiden, to learn if she had read his meaning.

“ Pek ahi, dostoum — very well, my friend : ” she replied with as much composure as she could assume ; “ But may I not bring a companion with me ? ”

"Not one," said Ildji Rezà decisively; "You must sit beside the fountain with your face turned Mecca-ward, just where the shadows of the boughs are deepest; and dip this mirror three times into the pure water. At the third immersion loosen your hold, and your griefs will sink to the bottom of the basin with the *anali*: then cast over yourself a dark-coloured cloak, and remain an hour motionless. Do this, and when next I bask beneath the glory of your smile, it will be as bright as daybreak in the East."

The fair Delsaïsè extended her hand to receive the prize, and, as he resigned it, the son of Yezid pointed to the frame-work in which it was set; and the delighted girl saw that it was written entirely over in a small and distinct character. Hastily laying it aside, she busied herself among the toys and perfumes; and having selected a few of the most costly, she flung a purse of gold into the box, for the eye of the Aga Baba chanced to be upon her; and bade Ziba carry them to her mother, while she selected a few trifles to distribute among her attendants.

Many a covert hint, and many a passionate pledge veiled in metaphor, passed between the happy lovers, ere Ildji Rezà obeyed the mandate of the Aga Baba, and prepared to quit the harem. He arranged his merchandise with a care which rendered the ceremony most wearisome to the Numidian ; and, had it not been that the worthy functionary was yet expecting an offering of tobacco from the pedlar, the son of Yezid would assuredly have been ejected with more speed than courtesy. All was, however, at length replaced : the cases were closed, the bokshas folded, and having pressed the hem of the lady's garment to his lips, Ildji Rezà found himself compelled to depart.

But the magic mirror was in her hands — his image was yet in her heart — that very night, if she listened to his prayer, they would meet to part no more — to fly together — to be happy ! Ildji Rezà scarcely felt the earth on which he trod — his spirit floated in the pure akash — he was an altered man ; and he had stolen to the squalid hovel of Satira, and cast aside the rags in which he had been disguised, ere one memory of

the Toorkoman and his own rash oath had marred the brightness of his visions.

When he reached his father's house, he paid no visit to the harem, for he knew that the proud spirit of his mother must be stricken to the earth by the indignity which had been offered to her only and idolised son; but, passing quietly to his own apartment, he closed the door against all intruders, and spent the hours which must intervene until midnight, in endeavouring to picture to himself the result of his appeal to the Bey's daughter. Much did he trust to the love she bore him; but alas! as Ildji Rezà, in solitude, leisurely contemplated the extent of the sacrifice which, in their coming interview, he was about to require of her, he found himself less at ease, and by no means so confident of success as he had been when he first formed the project.

He had asked her to fly with him; to abandon her father's roof, to forego her mother's affection, and to quit her birthplace with all its associations of love and luxury, to share the fortunes of a wanderer, who must carve out his destiny in a

distant land and among strangers, with the edge of his weapon : and Ildji Rezà quailed, even in his solitude, when he remembered that this was not all ! That, before he could secure to her the mere doubtful benefit of such an existence, a still more terrible trial awaited her ! But should he tamely suffer her to incur it ? She, in whom he had learned to garner up his soul—whose love was his life, whose presence made his paradise ? Never ! never ! He would leave a heavy sum in the hands of the Bectachy, to satisfy the Arab dealer for his accursed horse ; and on that very animal would he bear away his bride. The thought delighted him ; and he hurriedly counted out a heap of gold, and secured it in a sealed bag, which he superscribed with the name of Ali the Toorkoman ; and as soon as the twilight fell, he hastened with it to the tomb where he had on the previous night been secreted by the Dervish.

All was silent ; and as no voice replied to his cautious whisper, he entered ; and groping his way to the spot whence the Bectachy had taken the cypress wine, he removed the stone,

194 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

and deposited the gold beside the almost exhausted liquid: and this done, he left the building with a lighter heart than he had known since his compact with the Toorkoman.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ARAB STEED—*continued.*

SCARCELY had the Aga Baba quitted the room with the son of Yezid, to secure his portion of the spoil yet to be obtained from the supposed pedlar, in the shape of tobacco and sweetmeats; than the fair Delsaïsè, bending over her faithful Ziba, murmured, in a low happy voice, the name of Ildji Rezà.

“ What of him, Effendimou—my mistress ? ” she asked : “ Mashallah ! can it be that my wild suspicion was indeed true ? Has he really desecrated the harem of Kassim Bey by his presence ? ”

“ Not so, not so ; ” smiled the fond girl, trembling with excitement and delight ; “ Say,

rather, can it be that he has risked his life to gladden the wretched Delsaïsè with the assurance of a love that can survive even insult? Yes, Ziba, yes; it was indeed the son of Yezid who knelt beside me but a moment back—who made the sunbeams of joy penetrate through the lattices of my bosom—who has raised me from the depths of wretchedness to a bliss worthy of the houris! Guzum—my eyes! the light of my being! Janum—my soul! my Sultan! and my Lord! Nor am I even yet desolate, although the day-beam has departed, for I have still this precious anali, which shall be to me as a companion until we again meet!"

And flinging herself back among her cushions like one who brooked no further converse; heedless of the piteous "Eh vah! eh vah!—Mercy on us!" of the terrified and conscience-stricken Ziba, the young beauty commenced the perusal of Ildji Rezà's communication on the frame-work of the hand-mirror.

As she read, her breath came quick, and her cheek crimsoned—to fly with him from her home, without the solace of a mother's parting

kiss, and, it might be, pursued by a father's curse; it was a fearful prospect! But to fly with him whom she loved—to be his for ever while life warmed her pulses — to see him, hear him, and devote to him the best energies of her heart — to know that for her, and for her love, he had thus become an exile and a wanderer — there was solace for all her suffering in the thought: and she had many hours yet left to her in which to decide; while she should at least see him once more that very night where they had first met, and hear from his own lips all that he had to urge in favour of a project to which her trusting woman-heart already inclined.

The mirror had wrought its spell; and when the fond girl had pressed again and again to her lips the precious characters which had been inscribed upon it, she plunged it into a vessel of rose-water which stood beside her, and smiled as she saw the writing fade beneath the moisture. And then, how she sighed for the twilight! and when the twilight fell, how earnestly she prayed for night! The calm, soft, perfume-laden night, with its myriad stars, and its fading moon, on

which she guessed not that her young fate was hinged !

And the midnight came at length, and soon the harem of the Bey was hushed in sleep. The cheek of beauty rested on the embroidered cushions of luxury—the music of the zebec, and the voices of the singing women were at rest; the soul, freed from the heavy prison of the flesh, in which by day it was pent up, stood in all its splendour on the threshold of the spirit-land; and Fancy, unlocking with a jewelled key the golden barrier of the city of dreams, let loose a troop of iris-habited visions which danced lightly through the realms of slumber; and cheated many a doomed and stricken wretch into a temporary glory that lent new bitterness to his waking.

Midnight ! In which prowl forth the outcast sinner, and the beast of prey, the terror of the city and of the forest; the felon, yet unwhipped of justice, whose deeds shun the light; and the wretched, to whom that light is loathsome. But one kept vigil at that still hour who was none of these: one to whom life had hitherto

offered more of sunshine than of shade ; none of whose thoughts were evil ; and she stood listeningly for a while at the garden-portal of her proud father's palace, with her white garments gleaming in the moonlight, and her small hand pressed upon her heart to still its beatings, like the fair spirit of another world, wandering by some strange spell among the denizens of this !

There was not a sound to be heard in the harem — even the watchful Aga Baba slept — no voice came from the slumbering city—she heard only the whispering of the leaves to the summer wind, and the fall of the fountain, as the waters plashed on the large petals of the delicate lilac lotus ; and the fair Delsaïsè raised her bright young brow to the blue sky, and smiled as she fled across the open space which intervened between the large basin and the acacia-grove, where she was to meet her lover.

He was already there awaiting her ; and, as he strained her to his heart, and listened to her murmured words of tenderness and trust, he was stricken to the very soul ; and could have grovelled in the dust at her feet, as he remem-

bered the fate to which, in his ignorance and vanity, he had madly doomed her. “ It may not yet be too late ! ” he whispered to himself : “ I will redeem my honour while I have yet time : I will tell her all ; I will lay bare my unworthiness, and leave her for ever ! She is so young, so beautiful, so little fitted to a life of struggle — Allah be thanked, it is not yet too late ! ”

“ Delsaïsè ; ” he said at length, as he led her deeper into the shadow of the trees ; “ Sultana of my soul, without whom the sky of life will know no sun ; Peri, who wert sent on earth to shew mankind the fellowship that awaits them in Paradise : since I saw thee last ; in the few fleeting hours which have elapsed since I talked to thee of love, and flight, and asked of thee the sacrifice of home, and parents, and country ; my spirit has sickened at its own selfishness ; and now I am here to say that I cannot—that I will not — so wrong thy trust, so ill repay thy tenderness.”

“ And wherefore ? ” demanded the fair girl in astonishment ; “ Did I shrink from the trial ?

Min Allah—Heaven forbid ! That is not love which basks in the sunshine, and cowers under the tempest—that is not love which lives on only in the midst of luxury and ease, and expires in the hour of trial and of tears — Talk not thus, janum—my soul ! Do you abandon nothing when you ask of *me* the sacrifice of home and friends ? Does not our flight entail on you also the loss of both ? And shall I murmur where you do not repine ?”

“ Delsaïsè ;” faltered Ildji Rezà, as he drew a dagger from his girdle ; “ plunge this handjar into my breast ; it will be less painful than words like these ! You know not half my unworthiness—half my crime—but a better feeling is come upon me, and you shall no longer be deceived. Inshallah ! I trust in Heaven, that you will pardon, and forget me.”

“ Forget you !” echoed the fond girl with pale and quivering lips ; “ What words are these ? If you leave me I shall linger for ever about your memory, as a ghoul wanders among the graves of the dead—for me there will be no

longer stars in heaven, nor flowers upon earth—
Ildji Rezà, you shall not leave me!"

" Ne bilirim — what can I say ?" retorted the anguished lover ; " At least, ere you abandon yourself to certain hardship, and probable peril, let me tell you all"—and they seated themselves side by side in that leafy solitude, and the son of Yezid poured into the ear of the trembling girl the fatal secret of his mad oath.

" And you would have given me to another ?" was the tender reproach which first rose to her woman-lip.

" Alas ! I had never then beheld you—never looked upon the brightness of a beauty, compared with which that of other maiden's is but as the ray of the fire-fly beside the sunbeam."

" And when said you that this fearful compact was to be kept ?"

" Even at the mahâk ;" gasped out Ildji Rezà.

The wretched girl glanced at the fading moon—it was her last night—the fatal hour was come.

" Allaha es marladek—Heaven preserve me !" she murmured.

“ He will ! he will ! ” exclaimed the son of Yezid, as he started to his feet ; “ I go, Delsaïsè, with the curse of a broken vow upon me, a perjured man : and I go for ever — the brand is on my brow — the iron in my soul — but better thus, far better, than if your wretchedness were written there ; for I go alone.”

“ Not so — not so — ” said the brave girl, as she stood beside him, and firmly grasped his arm ; “ Hence you go not, unless we go together ; nay, hear me out in my turn ; if you persist, I will arouse the harem, and I will cling to you, and fetter your motions, so that every attempt at escape shall be useless—Need I tell you what will be the result ? ” and she raised her large eyes in horror to his : “ death, death — a bitter and a degrading death ; but we shall at least die together.”

“ Delsaïsè this must not — shall not be — to see you in the power of that fiend would be to me worse than ten thousand deaths.”

“ But we will escape him.”

“ I dare not brave the venture.”

“ Ildji Rezà : ” said the Bey’s daughter ; “ I

am a woman, and yet I say to you, we will dare the danger, and overcome it."

" By what means ?" was the gloomy inquiry.

" Inshallah — I trust in Heaven !" answered Delsaïsè, as she clasped her hands together, and bowed her head meekly upon her bosom.

" Yet listen to me —" commenced Ildji Rezà deprecatingly.

The voluntary victim only replied by pointing to the moon, whose sickly light was waxing fainter in the distance ; and ere she had withdrawn her hand, both were startled by the loud neighing of a steed close under the wall of the garden. Ildji Rezà smote his brow passionately, and flung himself along the earth.

" We are summoned, my soul ;" said Delsaïsè, in a low shrill whisper which made the blood curdle in his veins ; " It is our only chance of escape — if we part, we die ; and you are lost here and hereafter."

" I dare not — will not —"

But again the maiden pointed towards the moon, and the son of Yezid sprang from the earth like a maniac : " Be it so, then ;" he ex-

claimed frantically : “ we will fly — we will escape — we will yet be happy.” And he laughed wildly as he lifted the undaunted girl in his arms, and mounting the mouldering wall at the spot which Ziba had formerly indicated, leapt fearlessly from the summit into the road beyond.

Near the tree beside which they stood, the fatal Arabian was made fast to a buttress of the wall, beneath the thick branches of a hanging cedar, by which it was nearly concealed ; in an instant its bridle-rein was in the hand of Ildji Rezà, and he in the saddle, with his precious burthen in his arms. But in vain did the frantic young man attempt to direct the course of the ill-omened steed. Seemingly affrighted by its unaccustomed load, the animal flew recklessly along, as though driven forward by some invisible spirit ; and, heedless alike of bit and stirrup, plunged headlong towards the high precipice indicated by the Toorkoman, beneath which flowed the rapid Barrady.

The brain of Ildji Rezà reeled, and his strength forsook him ; he flung the bridle from his hand, and clasped the slender form of Del-

saisé closer to his heart, while she hid her face upon his shoulder, and neither wept nor spoke. On, on they flew, until borne upon the wind came the triumphant shout of the expectant Toorkoman ; and then once more the heart of the son of Yezid grew big with the advancing peril ; and when they gained the base of the rock, and that the hated form of the Arab Merchant emerged from beneath the shadow of the building by which it was created, he drew his handjar from his girdle, and clutched it like one who holds to his last hope of life.

But the mad animal paused not beneath the precipice ; with dilated nostrils, expanded eyes, and outstretched neck, he toiled and scrambled up the frightful ascent, leaping like a wild cat over every cleft and chasm, and dashing fragments of the rock from beneath his feet, which fell rattling and plashing into the stream ; until, upon the narrow table-land on which the tower was built, stood the horse and his owner side by side, not many inches from the brink of the precipice.

The pause was brief : for, as the animal

halted beside the Merchant, a heavy hand was laid upon its rein, and it reared violently to escape the pressure ; when it rose on its haunches, Ildji Rezà slackened his grasp of the maiden to strike at the Toorkoman with his handjar ; and as it suddenly recovered its position, impelled earthward by the weight of his bending figure, the abruptness of the motion flung the ill-fated girl from the saddle — One wild shriek rang out on the clear air, as a mass of white drapery fell headlong from the summit of the precipice, and was succeeded by a heavy splash, and the dashing of the severed waters against the base of the rock : and then came a yell, scaring the winds of heaven like the uttered agony of a tortured spirit ; and the son of Yezid vaulted from the saddle to the earth, and stood face to face with his enemy !—There was no waste of words —nothing to learn, nothing to tell ; as Ildji Rezà pointed downward to the death-freighted waters of the river, and sprang to the throat of the Toorkoman like a maniac !

Scarcely a foot's space was between them and a cruel death, whose horrible presence had been

with them but a moment back ; and yet they struggled like men who had the wide earth for their arena. The Merchant was armed as well as his antagonist with a sharp dagger, but for some seconds their weapons were useless ; they grappled like men in the last agony — they wound about each other like serpents — they clung together as though united by some invisible link—it was a wrestling of spirits, where the body bent to the impulses of a mightier influence : but this could not last ; ere long there was a deep gasping groan — a heavy fall — and the Toorkoman was standing over his victim, panting with hatred and exertion ; his teeth clenched, his turban loosened, and his hand bloody : while the first faint ray of dawn just rested on the shining hilt of the weapon which was buried in the heart of Ildji Rezà, and revealed his severed lips and glittering teeth : the hand which still grasped his dagger hung over the precipice ; and as the exulting victor spurned him with his foot, it seemed as though the next touch must hurl him from the brink ; but the Toorkoman, after having by that indig-

nity satiated his hate, bent calmly down, and withdrew his handjar from the breast of his victim, wiping it carefully with the hem of his garment, ere he returned it to the scabbard ; this done, he gave one long shrill whistle, and forth from beneath the shadow of the building came the Bectachy.

“ Gidelem—let us go ; ” said Ali hoarsely ; “ the kavashlir* will scent the carrion, and some foul chance may put them upon my track —Cursed be the stripling arm that could not keep a firmer hold ! I have lost my bride — I am for El Masr — when you next hear of me I shall be snuffing the sea-breeze at Boulac. Meanwhile, there is your gold, and with it this screed of counsel :—when you would again sell yourself to Sheitan, see that you earn your wages more manfully, or you may chance to be paid in another coin ! ” and having struck his hand contemptuously on the hilt of his weapon, and flung a purse at the feet of the Dervish, the Toorkoman seized the bridle-rein of his horse, and led him to the base of the rock, when,

* City police.

springing lightly to the saddle, he galloped away across the plain.

It was a Bectachy who some hours subsequently carried to the house of Yezid the Khawaji the dark tidings of his son's murder, and led the agonised father to the spot where lay his child : and who shortly afterwards went on his way rejoicing, for he had earned gold by his discovery, and escaped suspicion.

The Barrady ere sunset gave up its dead ; and many were the surmises which were hazarded throughout Damascus, at the extraordinary coincidence which on the same day had plunged two families in tears and lamentations, that were to have been united in bonds of relationship. Dark hints, and mysterious whispers were busy in the bazars ; and even Latif Effendi himself forebore to jest on an occurrence apparently inexplicable ; while, as neither the Toorkoman dealer nor the wandering Dervish ever again appeared in Damascus, the truth would never have come to light, had not Ali the Khawaji told the tale when he was lying on his death-bed

at Scanderia, waiting with the lively faith of a
True Believer to be wafted on the dark wings
of Asraël to the arms of the Houri.

PART II.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“By the Black stone at Mecca!* he was a more fitting companion for the Ghouls and Afrits of Jehanum;” yawned the Pasha, as the low voice of Katinka ceased; not altogether conscious whether he had really heard or only dreamed the termination of the Merchant’s adventures: “Anesseny sikdam!† was he not a dog, and the father of dogs? And was the paradise of the Faithful ever meant to be an abiding-place for the unclean? Wallah billah — by the Prophet! you might as well people it with franks and giaours! What say you, janum—my soul?”

* The famous stone in the holy sepulchre, which is kissed by every Moslem on his arrival.

† An expression of contempt.

he added, turning to his fair wife, down whose pale cheeks the large tears were coursing each other in streams : “ Do you believe that Ali the Toorkoman ever bathed in rivers of milk, and drank his sherbet in Paradise ? ”

“ Allah forbid ! ” murmured Carimfil Hanoum piously : “ such as he were strange company for the houri of Corkam.” *

“ As to Ildji Reza ; ” pursued the Satrap, who was inclined to be critical under the gentle approbation of his wife ; “ the man had no wit in him ; he blackened his own face, and deserved his fate ; though it was hard that the poor girl should suffer—But what said I ? what is written, is written—and she merited her destiny; for had she not desecrated the harem by allowing the foot of a stranger to tread its carpets ? By the head of the Emperor ! had I been Kassim Bey——”

What the Satrap would have added is unknown, as the threat terminated in a volume of smoke which curled down his beard, and left the remainder of the sentence unuttered ; but the

* Paradise.

cheek of the Circassian flushed painfully for an instant, and then became pale as the leaf of the river-lotus: and her heart heaved as though it would have burst the shawl that cinctured her waist.

The Greek, meanwhile, sat apart; deep thought was on her brow, and something like contempt wreathed her lip as she marked the emotion of her friend, and the obtuse self-complacency of the Pasha. To her more wily spirit the victim seemed scarce worthy to be deceived; and yet, even amid that conviction, strange speculations and wild visions grew upon her — The Circassian loved another—*her* brother—the last relative whom she now possessed on earth — When they fled together—and fly together they would, she felt and knew if they again met—she should be alone; they would be everything to each other; and she should have no hold on the great chain of society if she fashioned not the link herself—She glanced at the Pasha—he was old; but what availed it to count his years? — he was dull and vain; but these were qualities which insured a wife's supremacy—he might be weighed

in the holy wezn* with half the Satraps in the pay of the Padishah, and not kick the beam ; he was in short—a Turk—and the lip of the beautiful Greek curled again into deeper disdain than before.

But the electric spark had been struck ; and Katinka, with the quick talent of her nation, possessed also its craft and selfishness ; and slowly, by almost imperceptible degrees, her manner towards the Pasha changed. Even Carimfil *felt* that it did so ; but it was impossible to say in what the change consisted—perhaps the voice was a shade softer than before ; the bright eye shadowed ; the light step less elastic : but, be it what it might, the young wife was satisfied, as it harmonised with her own pensive mood, and dreamy tendencies ; for now Katinka sighed where she used to rally, and sympathised where she had formerly chidden.

The Satrap himself was the last to perceive the revolution which had taken place in the beautiful Greek ; but he was conscious, during his visits to the harem, that the flexible form of the young slave flitted more frequently before him ;

* The balance of the Prophet.

that the courteous offices which she rendered to him were more graciously and more gracefully performed : and, at length, he even detected her eyes resting upon him with an expression of melancholy tenderness and abstraction that he could not fail to remark.

The Pasha smoked and wondered; and gazed alternately at his wife and her friend, until the deep glowing beauty of the Greek grew upon his fancy, and threw the pale loveliness of the Circassian into the shade ; and then he pondered within himself whether Katinka indeed loved him, and began to note with increasing interest every action of the wily slave. He slept no more when she swept the chords of her zebec, though its music had become more subdued and mournful ; and when she sang, he listened yet more complacently, for her words told of hopeless passion, and love which fed upon itself, and clung to its own ruin. The sherbet offered by her hand had more sweetness, and the chibouque more perfume ; and, in short, the visits of the Pasha to the harem became more frequent and more lengthened as he gradually yielded to the

conviction that he was beloved. Carimfil, beautiful and indulged as she was, had never loved him : yet here beside her was a young creature to the full as fair, glowing with talent and enthusiasm, graceful as a simorg, and musical as a bulbul, whose looks betrayed to him the secret of her heart !

The idea was fascinating ; and the Satrap dwelt upon it with increased satisfaction from day to day ; carefully abstaining from a word or a gesture which might awaken the jealousy of his wife ; and it was reserved for the breath of song to break the spell, and to afford to Katinka the first assurance that she was understood.

The fair Carimfil was, on one occasion, more melancholy even than her wont, the Pasha more silent and more tedious ; and the crafty Greek felt her power to chase this gloom, and to render the Satrap conscious of the value of her acquirements : without a word, therefore, and regardless of any bidding, she struck a few wild chords upon her instrument, and with bowed head, and eyes bent to the earth, she murmured out her song.

My childhood's home was 'mid the isles
 That gem the bright Egean sea ;
 Where summer in its beauty smiles,
 And song-birds hold their jubilee.
 Where sunshine with the ocean blent,
 And rested on its loving breast ;
 And every hour, in passing, lent
 Some charm to earth to make it blest.

I never dreamed I could forget
 That blissful home ; but ah ! the heart
 When its warm flow with love is met
 Can make its own bright world apart ;
 'Tis only when unloved—alone—
 And blighted—that I sigh to be
 In the dear isle where once I dwelt
 Amid the bright Egean Sea !

As the song ceased, the dark eyes of Katinka sought those of the Pasha, and she read there an assurance that thenceforward her island-home might be forgotten.

“ Mail oldum — I have fallen in love ! ” communed the Satrap with himself ; but he only gave utterance to a low grunt of approval, and a “ Pek ahi, Bèyaz — very well ” — as he drew a jewelled ring from his finger, and tendered it to the songstress : “ Your voice is pleasant as the south wind, and we owe you some requital for

the enjoyment.” And as the Greek prostrated herself before him, the Pasha held her hand a moment longer than was necessary, while he gave the gem into her possession.

“ Where the nightingale harbours, there is no need to welcome the thrush ;” said the Pasha, when Katinka had made her prostration, and returned to her place ; “ and where the fair Bèyaz dwells, the awali (singing-women) are needless.”

The languid Circassian smiled ; her thoughts were with Maniolo polo ; and it was a relief to her when the Pasha at length quitted the harem, and she could throw herself upon the bosom of her friend, to talk of the lover of her youth, and weep over his absence.

Skilfully did Katinka fan the flame ; she called up memories which made the heart of the unhappy wife beat high with tenderness and regret — she speculated on the future until the pale cheek burned, and the slight form quivered with emotion—she mocked at the Pasha’s blindness, and made merry at the expence of his complacent vanity : and then she digressed to

her brother — that brother who had long been every thing to both of them — she reminded the fond Circassian, who required no prompting to do full justice to the memory of his perfections, of all the noble qualities of his nature ; and how adversity, like the tile on the acanthus, had at once subdued and beautified his free and haughty spirit.

The twilight stole on them ere the subject was yet half exhausted ; and then they wandered forth into the dim gardens, with their white arms wreathed about each other's necks, and whispered of him to the stars, and to the leaves, by the low murmuring of the fountains ; and finally they sank to rest, each with her own bright vision ready to melt itself into a dream, and charm the hours of the long summer night.

Maniolo polo had, meanwhile, reached the city, but had hitherto failed in every attempt to make his vicinity known to the inmates of the Pasha's harem. In vain he traversed the streets, and gazed stealthily at every yashmac that he encountered, he met neither the fair Carimfil nor his sister : and after hours and days spent

in haunting the palace of the Satrap, he became at length convinced that unless he discovered some expedient by which he might penetrate under his very roof, he was as far distant from the accomplishment of his wishes, as though he had remained in Circassia.

Vexed to the soul, Maniolopolo, on the sixth evening of his unprofitable watching, turned away from the walls which separated him from the bright object of his thoughts ; and, careless of his path, sauntered on until he reached the Theriaki Tcharchhi,* whence the sounds of music came floating pleasantly on the still air.

“ You are welcome, Effendim ; ” said a portly personage who was gravely smoking his chibouque on a raised wooden platform overarched with vines, without the door of the building ; “ A caravan has just arrived, on its way to Bassora, and among the travellers are some celebrated almè (dancing girls), whom one of the hadjis, who is my friend, has prevailed upon to lodge in my house during their stay in the city ;

* Resort for Opium-eaters.

they are about to dance, and again I say that you are welcome."

Maniolopolo hesitated: he was well aware of the scenes of violence which occasionally take place among the opium-eaters during their paroxysms of temporary madness; but ere long, as the master of the Tcharchi enlarged upon the grace and beauty of one of the fair band, his reluctance vanished; and he suffered himself to be ushered into the spacious apartment, around which, on low and luxurious divans, sat about a score of the most dissolute youths of the city; while the centre of the floor was overspread with a Persian carpet, on which stood a groupe of young and splendidly-habited women, about to commence their performance.

Maniolopolo had never before witnessed a similar exhibition, and he looked on with as much curiosity as amusement; occasionally joining in the low chorus of approbation, which from time to time broke from the other spectators. Never had he seen so much raki and kakabi* swallowed in the same space of time, nor so

* Ardent spirits.

much khaf, and beng, and hashish, and afiou* devoured; and it was consequently without surprise that, as the hours grew into night, he found the voice of revelry rapidly deepening into discord; nor could he forbear a smile when he heard the rioters reproaching each other with the very vices to which they were themselves addicted; “Theriakee—opium-eater!” shouted one; “dost thou, maddened by the poison that thou hast swallowed, dare to argue with me?” — “Dog of a wine-drinker!” exclaimed a second; “is it when thou art drunk with the liquid fire of the Infidels, that thou talkest to a Mahomedan of his duty?”

Blows followed fast on words; and throwing down a coin which offered ample payment for the entertainment of the Tcharchi, Maniolopolo hastened to escape from the pollution of the scene; leaving half-a-dozen unturbaned heads rolling on the floor, amid a chorus of expletives more energetic than courteous; and the shrill shrieks of the women, who, huddled together in a corner, were trembling with affright.

* Intoxicating drugs.

But his visit to the Theriakee To
not been altogether unprofitable to
Greek ; and he anxiously awaited the
order to carry into effect the plot wh
been contemplating during the perf
the almè.

CHAPTER XIX.

"I HAVE dreamt a dream ;" said Saifula Pasha on his next visit to the harem of his wife : " a dream which lasted me the whole night. Ba-shustun—on my head be it ! I will give a purse to whomsoever can read it to me aright."

"I have been said to have some lore on the subject of visions ;" said Katinka eagerly ; " my mother read them like a book —Will it please your Excellency to describe it to me ?"

"And why not ?" was the reply ; " Listen, and you shall hear.—I was at Stamboul, in the bright ' City of the Three Seas,' but peace was not within her walls : there were flames, and shouts, and sounds of warfare ; and the streets

ran blood ; and then, Ou Allah ! I thought that I was deposed from my pashalik, and that all my wealth was swept away, and I was a ruined man ; and there came a season of famine ; and you, guzum—" and he turned, and looked fondly towards his wife ; " you were beside me, and we both hungered ; when suddenly the Padishah—(may his beard flourish !) sent us a tray of tchalva and a dish of pillauf. But even as we ate, the cry came to us of those who famished ; and, Wallah ! our repast was bitterly seasoned by the anguish of those whom we could not succour—'Twas a dark dream, and I am troubled by it ! Speak, Bèyaz ; can you tell what it signifies ?"

" Your highness did well to terminate the fast by a feast ;" said the Greek girl with assumed gravity ; " your dream bodes you nothing but good ; uncertainty for a time, but ultimate success in all your projects. I shall look ere long to see you summoned to Stamboul by the Lord of the Three Seas, and to hear you saluted as Muschir* Saifula Pasha."

" Allah bilir—Allah alone knows ;" answered

* Pasha of Three Tails.

the Satrap with a complacent smile: “ By the soul of my father, should you be a true prophet, you shall find that I am not unmindful of your prophecy — Chok chay — that is much.” And the Pasha looked as magnanimous on the faith of his promise, as though he had rewarded the beautiful soothsayer for her vague solution with a hundred purses.

“ The dream of my lord has brought to my own mind a memory of the past;” said Katinka, as a veil of sadness fell over her deep eyes — “ I have a tale whose grief will teach all visionary sorrow to pass away before it, as the mists of morning disperse before the sun-break — or as the desert-sands are scattered by the simoom — I will tell it now, if my lord listens.” And having received an encouraging nod from the Pasha, whose chibouque had just been replenished, and whose cushions were arranged with a care to which no luxury could be added, she seated herself at his feet ; and shaking back the long hair which fell over her brow and bosom, and assuming as if unconsciously the stern expression, and impressive attitude of a Pythoness, she commenced her recital.

CHAPTER XX.**THE LAST OF THE JANISSARIES**

THE day of blood that witnessed the final extinction of the Janissaries was at an end. The last light had faded upon the mountains ; shadows were multiplied upon the ripple of the Marmora ; the fitful wind sighed through the forest-boughs ; and, save in the excited city of Stamboul, all was peace, as a tall and silent figure emerged from among the tombs of the necropolis of Eyoub. He paused for a moment when he stood upon the crest of the hill, and looked down upon the village, and shook his clenched hand convulsively in the direction of the smouldering ruins which had so lately been the funeral pyre of hundreds of his comrades — of scores

townsmen and associates—His breast heaved—his pulses quivered—It was Yusuf—the far-famed, the formidable Yusuf! When the yesterday's sun had gilded the domes of the golden city, he had been an Aga of Janissaries—What was he now? He had seen the strong limbs of his brother—of Omar the fleet-footed—quiver, as he hung suspended from the fatal cord to the “Tree of Groans” in the Atmeidan, one of a thousand of the same hour's victims—he had seen it, and he felt that his heart was broken. Omar was the last son of his mother—the pet lamb of the fold—in the pride of his spirit he had left his paternal roof to carry arms beside his brother Yusuf—and he had died the death of blood before that brother's eyes.

The curse was deep and fearful with which, after wading in carnage, and fighting like a demoniac under the shadow of Omar's corpse, the Aga was borne away by the stream of fugitives, who, hopeless at length of victory, sought safety in a flight as unpromising as their resistance. The band, fighting as they retreated, grew weaker every instant; long pent-up hate was

loosed, and the fury of the inhabit polluted city seconded the more or tacks of the soldiery. The wretched maddened by their despair, fought f the last ; and the streets, along v passed, were choked with dead.

The scymitar of Yusuf gleamed head, and he had just aimed a stroke opponent when the earth gave way l feet, and he fell heavily for a consider pressed upon in his descent by the b man whom he had slain. He heard he disappeared, but the yell endured moment ; the fierce crowd hurried long he could distinguish a hoars which told him that the tide of blood ing in a distant part of the city.

The Aga's first care was to glare around, and he was immediately con faint light streaming through a cav roof of the subterranean into which h so opportunely introduced. Not a tokened the vicinity of any human c ship ; and Yusuf next hurled from

the body of his enemy, which yet lay heavily across his own. This done, he slowly stretched forth limb after limb, to assure himself that he was uninjured by the fall ; and, having satisfied himself of the fact, he was not long in ascertaining the nature of his compulsory retreat.

Yusuf, as he rose from the earth, stood in a spacious vault, surrounded on all sides by stately columns of marble, and dimly lighted by narrow grated windows level with the roof ; and at once understood that he tenanted, in company with the dead man at his feet, the immense cistern of Ben-Vebir-Direg — the Vault of the Thousand-and-One Columns. He shuddered as the truth burst upon him ; for he remembered that, although, during the hours of daylight, a crowd of miserable wretches congregated there to spin silk, and thus earn amid its noxious vapours a scanty and insufficient existence, it was a place of evil repute by night ; and said to be peopled by beings whose demoniac nature shut them out from “ the glimpses of the moon.”

But Yusuf was brave by nature, nor was this a moment to yield to weak and childish terrors :

death was about him everywhere, a ready to bless Allah and the Proph had found even this temporary have night of terror.

The secret of his personal impuni great a fall was simple—the water-co cistern having been turned during t of St. Sophia, and the vault used as a for the soil dug out from the found earth upon which he alighted was elastic to secure him from greater inj few slight bruises; but the wild legends localised their superstitions at Ben rendered the locality any thing but l eyes of the Moslem : a thousand dar ful memories of the subterranean rus the brain of the fugitive—strange, an fearful shapes all located by popular this gloomy spot ; and thus, bold a although preoccupied by other and ain evils, had Yusuf-Aga been fre his hiding-place, he would assuredly chosen the haunted subterranean.

The dull but instant echoes of the d

repeated every sound ; and as the wretched fugitive slowly paced among the columns, searching for some point of escape, of which he might avail himself under shelter of the darkness, the hollow reverberations of his own footsteps made his brow burn, and his heart throb, as he mistook them in his terror for the tramp of approaching enemies.

He soon discovered that his only hope of egress was by the very spot of his entrance ; a narrow opening, formed by the decay of a mass of masonry, which had partially yielded to the unusual weight of the contending crowd ; and for an instant his spirit quailed, as his eye, accustomed to the darkness, betrayed to him the insecure and threatening state of that section of the roof which touched upon the aperture. Yet to stay in this gloomy vault, to incur the certain penalty of starvation or discovery, was yet more frightful ; and Yusuf having resolved upon at least attempting his escape, when night should have fallen upon the city, and examined with care the dangerous accessories by whose means it was to be accomplished, ultimately turned his attention to the dead body which lay near him.

His superstitious tremors were not less discovering, from certain mysterious lodges carefully concealed about the person of the stranger, that he was a karabash, or whether there was a description of person with whom Musselmaun ever desires to meddle in any manner. "Y'Allah — in the name of the prophet ! Is this my work ?" murmured the man to himself : "Haremzadeh—ill-born that I am ! Was it not enough that I should see myself hung like a dog, and swinging in the wind be hunted through the streets of the city by a wild beast by the yelling cowards who have kissed the dust from my slippers ; but now I must myself throw dirt upon the grave of my master and slay a karabash ? "

And he rocked himself to and fro for several minutes, as he sat beside the body of his master, uttering the low "Amān ! amān !—alas ! of a stricken spirit ; while at intervals he started in affright, as the echoes of the voices flung back the lamentation like the voices of fiends !

Gradually, however, he recovered

panic, with the eternal kismet of his faith ; and he then proceeded to strip the body of the karabash, and to attire himself in the dead man's garments ; after which he carefully dressed the corpse in his own, ere he indulged himself with a more detailed survey of his newly appropriated possessions.

The shawl which had formed the turban of the karabash was coarse in texture, and uninviting in appearance ; but as the Aga withdrew it, and began to wind it about his own head, several pieces of large gold coin fell from amid its folds, to the extreme gratification of Yusuf, who saw in them a possible mean of escape from the terrors of the blood-drenched city. In a few moments the disguise was perfect ; and having squared his beard with a knife which he carried in his girdle, the Aga of the Janissaries was conscious that to the eye of a stranger he might pass unsuspected.

A few papers, which Yusuf was unable to decypher, but which, prudently remembering that should he leave them in the vault they might lead to his own detection, he resolved on

carrying away ; and, save these, a
of the most common description, a
of cedar wood, a few paras carefully
little bag, and a small box of bla
stituted all the personal effects of th
and piously exclaiming “ Allah !
God is great ! ” Yusuf had soon
box of dye over his beard and mus

These arrangements made, the
other occupation for the remaining
light than sitting on the damp ear
mending the souls of the Sultan
and his Yuzbashis (captains) to th
Satan ; spitting upon the graves o
tors ; and branding themselves a
tives with all the opprobrious
which his language is rife ; until,
on, his bitterness slowly yield
gentler and fonder feelings ; and
recurred to Omar — to his brothe
burying his face in his hands, the
sary, the blood-thirsty Aga, the
Moslem, wept !

“ Allah ! Allah ! It is hard t

murmured ; “but who am I that I should rebel against the Prophet of the Faithful ? Sen etkiar der— you are the master ; Sen bilirsen — you know best. Because I sit down beside the dried-up fountain, shall the spring well out afresh ? If I say that my caique shall travel westward, will the wind blow from Mecca to fill her sails ? ” And again the strong man wept ; but this time it was in a sadder and a calmer spirit.

Other visions grew upon him as he lingered there. His mother had wooed a fair young bride to his home: yet another week, and she was to have been his—the light of his eyes, and the day-beam of his existence. Where was she now ? and by whom would she be won ? A shadow fell upon his brow which danger had never called there, for all was over ; he had no longer a home—should he even escape, he must live an exile, and die a stranger to his own land ; the “ Captain of a Hundred ” was a crouching fugitive, for whom the brand and the bowstring were alike ready. The eldest-born of his house was proscribed and pursued — Yusuf Aga

was no more — there remained only the trembling and torture-menaced victim of a new creed.

Not a ray broke across the murky sky of his fortunes — not a hope gleamed upon his future — he was a doomed man — and for a moment the bold Aga resolved to remain and abide his fate ; but as the deep darkness suddenly fell around him, after that brief and almost imperceptible twilight which in the East endures but for a moment, other thoughts and fears grew upon him — positive danger and superstitious terrors became blended in his imagination — he dreaded discovery, and shrank appalled at every gust of wind which penetrated into the vault : while a moment after, the deep stillness well nigh maddened him ; and he peopled the fearful space with shadowless forms, and the tall columns wore to his overheated fancy the semblance of gaunt and deathlike phantoms.

It was after one of these intervals of intense and solemn terror that he sprang hurriedly from the earth, and resolved to incur any risk, rather than endure a recurrence of such maddening

emotions. Even in the darkness he turned away from the spot whereon he knew that the dead karabash was stretched ; and following the wall with his hands, he felt the fresh air breathing upon his brow from above, and at once commenced his perilous ascent.

“ La illaha illallah—there is but one Allah !” whispered the wretched man between his clenched teeth, as he endeavoured to secure a footing in the interstices of the masonry : an object in which he was repeatedly baffled by the darkness.

“ Alhemdullilah—Praises be to Allah !” he at length exclaimed, wiping the drops from his brow with the sleeve of his vest, as he balanced himself on the rough edge of a projecting mass. But his pious self-gratulation was only momentary, for, with a crash which was echoed with frightful distinctness from the innermost recesses of the subterranean, the tottering stone gave way, and, in its fall, flung Yusuf violently to the earth.

“ Lahnet be Sheitan — curse on the devil !” exclaimed the baffled captive, with that sudden

transition of feeling which among the Turks forms so singular a contrast from their placid equanimity of manner: “ Allah bela versin—Heaven send it misfortunes ! Do the very stones wage war for the bloody-minded Mahmoud ? Am I to be baulked by a mass of marble ? ” And, with renewed energy, he rose from the earth, and once more groped his way to the aperture through which he distinguished a solitary star hanging in the heavens like a lamp of silver. The Aga hailed it as a good omen ; again he put forth all his strength, and, after the struggle of a moment, he secured a safe footing in the chasm whence the last stone had fallen. With his eye fixed steadily upon the friendly star, he put forth his arms in every direction until his hand came in contact with an iron staple, whence a portion of the marble frieze that had once adorned the roof of the vault had been detached by time. A few violent efforts sufficed to convince him of its firm hold upon the stone into which it had been driven ; and his next attempt was to swing himself suddenly upward, in order to seize the edge of the masonry pro-

jecting over the opening. Twice did he essay this dangerous exploit, and fail; while the blood spouted from his nostrils with the shock, and his hands clung maimed and smarting to the rusted iron; but all the energy of his nature was now aroused, and he did not suffer himself to pause.

“Korkma—fear not, Yusuf;” he almost shouted in a fit of temporary delirium; “Allah wills not that you should die the death of an earth-worm—On! on!—a bright star beckons you—you may yet live to revenge the death of the murdered Omar.”

As the words escaped him, a wild blast swept through the vault, and the excited Yusuf believing that he heard the voice of the karabash, aroused from the sleep of death by his own menace of revenge, swung himself once more madly upward, and fell on the rude pavement of the deserted street.

For awhile he lay stunned and motionless; but as the night-air swept lovingly across his forehead he slowly revived: and with returning consciousness grew the memory of his jeopardy.

242 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

Painfully and with difficulty he arose from the earth — bruised alike in body and in spirit ; and carefully avoiding the more frequented streets whence the yell of blood yet came to his ear, he stealthily made his way to the sacred cemetery of Eyoub.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LAST OF THE JANISSARIES—*continued.*

It was a glorious night as he stood there, on the hill-top, among the quiet graves: but all was riot in the bosom of the disguised Janissary. He was alone: far as his eye could wander in the clear starlight he could distinguish no human being save himself; and he moved slowly downward among the tall tombs, and crossed the wide and deserted street, until he paused by the water's edge—upon the lip of the land-locked port, whose ripple was ruddy with the fitful reflection of the burning pile which had once been to him as a home.

“ Allah buyûk der — God is great ! ” he said passionately: “ It must be even as he wills.

The clouds are for the wing of the wild bird — the billows for the monsters of the deep — and blood for the great ones of the earth —” and he smiled bitterly as he turned away, and under the shadow of the tall trees which over-canopy the village, stole hastily once more into the street.

The door of a house, about midway of the hamlet, stood partially open ; and after the pause of a moment, the disguised Aga passed the threshold, and then closed the gate, and secured it by a rude bar on the inside. All was silence throughout the dwelling, and the wanderer moved onward like one to whom the locality was familiar, until he reached a chamber in which a dim light was burning in a lamp upon the floor.

The room had but one tenant ; an aged woman, half buried amid cushions on a low sofa, and so absorbed in grief as to be unconscious of the intruder’s presence.

“ Eh vah ! delhi der — they are madmen ! ” broke at intervals from her lips : “ Was it for this that a son was born to me in my old age,

and that my first-born became strong in battle, and great in power ! Bana bak — look at me — what am I, that I should be childless in my weak years, when the grave is dug for me among the Faithful—Eh vah ! why did I not die before this sorrow fell on my gray hairs !" And again she buried her face in her spread hands, and the deep "amān" of utter wretchedness burst from her quivering lips.

" All are not gone !" said a deep voice at the threshold of the apartment ; and the mourner wildly thrust back the dishevelled hair from her brow, and glanced hurriedly towards the speaker : " The youngest and the fairest has passed away, and his blood is on the head of his murderers ; but Yusuf, the spirit-broken — Yusuf, the dis-honoured, yet lives — his beard is plucked out, and the grave of his father is defiled — He who was an Aga of Janissaries, is now a sakil-siz — a no-beard — but he is still the son of his mother — and lo ! he is here."

As the dull eye of the old woman detected under the disguise of the karabash the features of her son, and her ear drank in his accents, she

tottered towards him with a faint scream, and in the next moment she was clasped fondly to his breast.

" My son :" she murmured ; " my first and fairest ; you are restored to me—I am no longer alone—Allah has preserved for me my brave Yusuf, the sun of my evening sky—my Aga—" "

" Hush, mother :" whispered the fugitive ; " call me no longer by a name which is but another term for blood—we are swept from the face of the earth — the strong men of power are no more —"

" Chok chay—that is much :" said the old woman with frightful calmness ; " but you are here, and to me bosh der — it is nothing."

" Listen to me, mother :" urged Yusuf, as he released himself from her clasp, and led her gently to the sofa. " If I do not escape from the city before the sun rises over the mountain of Bulgurlhu, I shall never again look upon it — my life is forfeit — Allah es marladek—Allah preserve you ! I have come but to say my farewell to you for ever ere I depart : I have yet time to fly."

“ And whither ? ” asked his mother earnestly ; “ are not the blood-hounds abroad ? Do you hope to escape from the Padishah who has vowed your ruin ? Are you maddened by your misery when you forget that the light of his power stretches along the earth from the east even to the west, and that the shadow of his greatness lies upon the deep waters ? Sen chok adam — you are much of a man, Yusuf Aga ; but there is no safety for you save in the arms of your mother.”

The smitten Janissary shook his head bitterly.

“ I am old and poor ; ” pursued the anxious parent : “ I am helpless ; and therein will lie my strength — who would seek the man of might in the dwelling of the feeble and gray-haired widow of Abdul the shawl-mender ? ”

“ Ne apalum — what can we do ? ” asked Yusuf despondingly.

“ What can we *not* do, if Allah spare us to each other ? ” retorted his mother, encouraged by his partial acquiescence. “ Yusuf, my son, what may yet happen we know not ; Allah bilir — God alone knows ; but we are taught not to

tempt evil. Better to live in darkness than to die the death of blood — better to crouch beneath a wayside briar than to lie unsheltered from the storm. Stay with me, my son : the cloud may pass away from the land — the bash pezevenk—the vile wretch, who has brought this evil upon the children of the Prophet, may yet fall before the fire of vengeance — and then —”

“ All is over !” said Yusuf, with the calmness of despair : “ the rest is but a dream. Haif ! haif ! — shame ! shame ! that they who have so long upheld the glory of the Faithful, and the banner of the Prophet, should be trodden beneath the feet of dogs in the city streets—a by-word for giaours and infidels !” And as he ceased speaking, his aged mother caught his indignant tone, and echoed back “ Haif ! haif !—Shame ! shame ! ”

The joy of meeting once more her first-born son had for a brief time effaced from the memory of the aged Fatma the loss of the bright-eyed Omar : but when the burst of delight had spent itself, and that she had time to recall the words of Yusuf as he entered, the fear of death

grew upon her, and a sickness of the heart bent her even to the earth.

“And the absent one—” she gasped out ; “the child of my age—where is he ?”

“Gardash ! gardash ! — Brother ! brother !” exclaimed Yusuf, clasping his hands forcibly together ; “Thou of the fleet foot and the eagle-eye — thou of the kind smile and the soft voice —thy race is run—thy gaze is dimmed—livid is thy lip in death ; and thine accents will be no more heard, save by the houris of Paradise.”

“La illaha illallah—there is but one Allah !” groaned the bereaved woman ; “The great and the mighty of the earth are beyond the vengeance of a mother’s arm, but they are not beyond her curse—It will cling ! Yusuf, it will cling !—fell and heavy is ever the curse of a broken heart, when the grey head and the dim eye are bowed over the grave of the beautiful and the young, murdered in their beauty and their youth : but feller and heavier still is the malison of a mother poured out upon the fierce heart and the bloody hand which have bereft her of her fond ones. Eh vah ! I will sit down be-

side the grave of my brave boy, and the bitterness of my spirit shall have way."

"By the grave of Omar, of your last-born, will you never sit, my mother :" was the slow reply : "the dead of to-day have not passed from earth upon their cushions :—the brand and the cord have done their work —Omar is among those whose grave no man shall ever find." And as he ceased speaking, Yusuf cast himself upon the earth, and covered his face with his robe.

"Is it so ?" said Fatma, while a fierce gleam lit up her dull eye ; "Then will I only think of him when my heart melts at the grief of another, that I may steel myself against that mercy which has been withheld from me and mine—And for he who has wrought this ruin —may the Evil Eye smite him on the threshold of the mosque, and blight his prayers ; —may he never know slumber by night, nor peace by day—may every breath of air which fans his brow be polluting as the plague-wind —and may his children wither, and expire before his eyes at the moment when they are most dear to him !"

And the stricken man who lay at her feet raised his head from the earth for a moment, and responded to her malison with a hoarse "Amen!"

It was again the old woman whose voice broke upon this second and frightful silence; as from mourning for her lost son, she turned to fears for the one who was yet left to her: "Swear to me, my child, my brave and noble boy;" she said with startling suddenness, as her thoughts painted in colours too terrible for her to bear the probable consequences of his discovery: "Swear to me—you who are now my only tie to earth—that you will not attempt to escape—that you will remain here beneath the roof of your dead father—that you will never again venture forth into the streets of this accursed city, whose minarets point to heaven as if to direct the vengeance which will not fail.—The men of blood are ever abroad; let me not have to weep over my last child."

"Mother;" said Yusuf as he rose from the earth, and seated himself at her feet; "Ne bili-rim — what can I say? You ask for water

during a drought when no rain falls ; and for pomegranates when the world is wrapped in snow. Ne apalum—what can I do ? I am yet young, and my years may be many ; can I pass them in darkness, and with a chain upon my spirit ? You are old and feeble ; and since Allah took my father to himself, I have filled your dish with pillauf, and your cup with sherbet—how am I to buy rice, or to earn bread to support you and myself, save by escaping to a far province where I am unknown, and selling my sword to the Pasha ? Allah buyûk der—God is great ! I have yet some gold which I can leave with you until I may summon you hence, and offer you a roof in my place of exile."

" And what will be gold to me ; " asked Fatma ; " when I am bereft of both my children ? Can gold dry the tears of anguish, or buy a light heart when grief has bowed down the spirit ?—Will gold give me back the days when my sons sat at my feet, and I blessed them in the fullness of my joy, as I saw them tall and stately as two cedar trees, and beautiful as the light of morning ? One is gone—gone with all

his glory about him, to the grave—and when the other leaves me to brave the death his brother died, he talks to me of gold ! Bana bak — look at me ! am I not too feeble to outlive the loss of my last hope ?”

“ Hai, hai—true, true—it is indeed hard that in your old age and your bitter anguish you should be called upon to suffer another grief ;” said Yusuf soothingly : “ but, alas ! my mother, there is no alternative. Inshallah !—I trust in Allah !—I am disguised ; and under the shadow of the darkness, if I am prompt and cautious, I may escape. Hinder me not then ; let me go forth with your blessing upon me ; the world is wide, and a strong arm and a bold heart will never lack a weapon. Bashustun—on my head be it ! I will yet make the name of Yusuf ring in the ears of the men of strength.”

“ Chok chay—that is much ;” replied the old woman, catching a portion of his momentary enthusiasm ; “ you are a man, and you have the heart of a man ; as for your enemies, haivan der—they are animals—dogs, and the fathers of dogs, and I spit upon their beards——”

"I will go forth then, mother ;" said the Aga, attempting to rise.

"What shall I say ?" exclaimed the agonized old woman : "my son ! my son ! shall I not die as you pass the threshold ?—and yet, no—not so—I have no right to hold you back—why should you live in darkness and in dread, when you might be foot-free upon the mountains, and bathing your brow in the clear waters of the valley ? Go then—since it is better so—go—oghur ola—God speed you ! Better that I should pine in my solitude than that I should see your bold heart breaking from day to day—Sen ektiar der—you are the master : I am but a woman, and your's must be the words of wisdom : but linger not long, my son, ere you send me tidings of your existence, or I shall be as a fountain that is dried up, and as a cypress that is withered."

Anxious to avail himself of the remaining darkness, and rejoiced to find his mother in so resigned a frame of mind, Yusuf hastily poured into her lap the gold which he had found in the turban of the karabash ; and then, folding her

to his heart, and breathing above her a devout prayer to Allah that they might once more meet in happiness, he laid her gently back upon her cushions, and rushed out of the house.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LAST OF THE JANISSARIES—*continued.*

Not an hour after the wretched Yusuf quitted the roof of his mother, a loud outcry arose in one of the most squalid streets of the city, abutting on an obscure quay frequented principally by fishermen. There were sounds of pursuit — shouts of fierce threatening, mingled with curses of baffled hate ; and as the trembling tenants of the neighbouring houses rose on their sofas to listen, they could distinguish at intervals the name of Yusuf. The disguised fugitive had been detected ; and he was now trusting to his good speed to escape once more from his enemies. The darkness favoured him, for the chase was long continued, and still the cries were heard :

“ Lahnet be Sheitan—Curse on the devil—It is Yusuf the Janissary!—It is the bloody-minded Aga!—kiupek!—kelb!—dog!—cur! Bash pezevenk — headsman!” — every opprobrious epithet was in turn applied to the miserable man, as he fled before his pursuers; saving the breath which they were exhausting in invective, for the mighty effort at self-preservation to which his instinct rather than his reason impelled him.

Again Yusuf escaped — again he stood beside his mother, and her hot tears fell on his anguished brow — and this time, in his agony of heart, he vowed upon the Korân that he would never leave her more.

It was a fearful vow! The young strong man voluntarily resigning himself to a long life of imprisonment, and the never-sleeping dread of detection: coupled with the certainty of poverty, and the probability of actual want. But Yusuf was heart-broken; he had fallen suddenly from a post of responsibility and power to a position the most cruel: he could no longer lift his head among his fellow men, for he had been hunted like a noxious animal by his kind — he stood

alone—fatherless — brotherless — his very name must no longer exist — his presence beneath the squalid roof of his mother be unsuspected, lest the ruin which had overtaken him should be drawn down on her head also ! . He had been a Janissary, and the name had suddenly become a death-warrant ; it availed him nothing that there was no blood upon his hand ; the popular hatred had been seconded by the power and will of the Sultan, enforced by his new myrmidons, and the cry of destruction was on the wind.

Nothing remained to him save his mother — the widowed woman who smiled amid the bitterness of the hour as she received his vow, and felt that she was never again to part from him.

They were yet sitting side by side in silence, wrapped in gloomy imaginings, when a violent knocking upon the outer door of the dwelling aroused them from their lethargy of grief.

“ So soon ! ” exclaimed Yusuf fiercely ; “ Have they tracked the wolf to his lair so soon ! But the bold Aga of the Janissaries will not die the death of a vile animal without revenge ! ” And he drew from beneath his vest a gleaming yataghan,

and sprang towards the door of the apartment.

"Yusuf Aga," said the old woman in an accent of sudden calmness ; "what would you do? Can you war against a score? or would you pollute your mother's floor with blood—Sen chok adam — you are much of a man; but you cannot do battle against a host."

"I can at least sell my life dearly!" was the reply ; "Mother, mother, you feel as a woman; but my heart is the heart of a desperate man. Loose me; and let me at least die the death of a brave soldier!"

"Yusuf Aga, once more I tell you that you are mad ;" urged the aged Fatma, whose nerves had become suddenly strung by the great peril of her son : "Are you not taught by the Korân to love and to obey the mother of your youth? Do you love me, Yusuf; do you obey me, when you give yourself up to the bloodhounds, and sacrifice my gray hairs to foster your own pride? Think you that they will spare the aged woman, when the strong man is beaten down? If you can bear to give up the bosom upon which you

lay in your infancy to the knives of the butchers, go on, Yusuf Aga; and we shall die the death of blood and shame together."

"Allah buyûk der — God is great!" was the reply of the crushed and miserable man, as he extended his hand to his mother, and followed her bidding as passively as an infant ; "Do with me as you will."

The anxious Fatma waited no second bidding; and in the next moment Yusuf was skilfully, and without further resistance, concealed beneath the cushions upon which she had been sitting.

The uproar without had meanwhile become louder and more violent ; and authoritative cries of "Atch ! Atch ! — open ! open !" mingling with hoarser shouts of "Vour ! Vour !—strike ! break !—help ! that we may force this crazy door, and make our own entrance to the den of the blood-hound !" rang through the desolate dwelling ; and the trembling Fatma had scarcely time, after she had secreted her son, to fling a shawl over her head, before her chamber was crowded with strange men..

"Y'Allah — in the name of the Prophet ;"

she shrieked out, without rising from the cushions upon which she had flung herself on their approach, at once to screen her child, and to deceive his pursuers ; “ What is this ? Who am I that men should break in upon me and fill my house, without leaving me time to cover my face ? Am I a Frank woman, that I am to be seen unveiled by every dog who wishes to eat dirt, and to show his prowess by wronging the widow and the afflicted ? What seek ye here ? Bana bak — look at me — what find ye to repay you for the shame of committing violence on a woman whose hair is gray, and whose step is feeble.”

“ Yavash, yavash — softly, softly, mother ;” said one of the party, as by the dim light of the solitary and untrimmed lamp, his companions were hurriedly searching every nook of the wretched habitation : “ We mean you no harm. What could your blood profit us ? though we might in truth put the bowstring about your neck, were it only to silence your howling. But we have seen that bash pezevenk — that wretch, Yusuf Aga the iron-handed Janissary, enter a

dwelling hereabout, and it may chance to be yours : so tell the truth, mother, and we will not only leave you in peace, but we will pay the service in piastres."

Hoarsely did the old woman laugh : " The Prophet has not so favoured me ;" she said quietly ; " or gladly would I earn so easily that which I need so much. But no — no — no Janissary will ever enter here—What have I to do with the men of blood ? Kiupek der—they are dogs—Delhi der—they are madmen—their faces are blackened — Yok, yok, dostoum — no, no, my friends—you do but waste the time which you may need for your pursuit — stay here as long as you will—affiet ollah—much good may it do you—but you will find nothing more bloody-minded than yourselves under the roof of old Abdul's widow."

" Aferin — well done :" laughed her auditor in his turn ; " You at least take your revenge on us in words : but we shall soon leave you, mother, for I hear the tread of feet upon your crazy stairs — my comrades are returning from their search. Before I go, however, this much

by way of warning — when next there is an outcry at your door, open more quickly, if you would avoid suspicion——”

“ Ne bilirim ! — what can I say !” returned Fatma : “ you scarce allow me time to waken from my sleep, and to wrap a shawl about my head, before you burst into my house. Masseallah ! you are ill provided if you have not more wit than patience ; and will be balked of your errand if you judge not more surely when you have left my house than when you entered it.”

The search had of course proved fruitless ; for the intruders, conscious that in the eagerness of their pursuit, they had violated one of the most sacred laws of their religion, which enjoins all good Musselmauns to respect the privacy of their women ; and anxious, if possible, to recover traces of the fugitive ; were satisfied with the scrutiny which they had bestowed on the narrow dwelling of Fatma, and did not attempt to push their investigation further, and to rouse the indignant woman to any loud and public expostulation or complaint.

In a few minutes, consequently, the house was

cleared ; but it was not until after a much longer interval that Fatma rose, and taking the lamp in her hand, jealously searched every recess throughout the whole building in order to assure herself that no spy yet lingered beneath her roof ; ere she flung back the coverings from the face of Yusuf, and removed the cushions among which he had been buried.

“ Shekiur Allah—praised be His name ;” she said devoutly ; “ my son is yet beside me—the Prophet has heard my prayer. But you look not upon me, Yusuf, my well-beloved—my Aga !—my heart beats quick, and my breath is troubled—I am choked with joy even amid my misery—and will you not pay me with one smile for the life that I have saved ?”

“ Mother, you know that I love you :” was the cold and despairing answer : “ It was my duty to obey you, and it is done—but all is now over—I am no longer Yusuf Aga—a brave man, and the associate of warriors—I am disgraced—With a weapon in my hand, I have crouched like a dog before my enemies ; and owed my safety to the sheltering garments of a woman.

While I live, I must hide my head that my shame may not be read upon my brow—and when I die, the houris of Paradise will turn aside, that they may not welcome a craven to their arms."

"Ouf! Ouf!" exclaimed the mother; "guzum—my eyes! talk not in a tone that breaks your mother's heart; if the Prophet waits at the door of the seventh heaven to welcome the souls of the brave and the beautiful, shall the good son be shut out? And now, to our task, my Aga; we may again be visited; we must make for you a readier and a surer place of refuge, where you may defy the pursuit of the fierce-minded and the revengeful."

"Even as you will, my mother;" said Yusuf, as he pressed the hand of the old woman to his lips and forehead; "henceforward all shall be even as you list."

And Fatma was worthy of this trustfulness; for months wore on, and although more than once her home was invaded by the feet of strangers searching for her son, he escaped detection; and ultimately, if his existence were not

forgotten, he was at least suffered to live in peace in his place of concealment. Often did he yearn for liberty, and suggest to Fatma his desire to attempt once more to escape into the mountains, but she ever discountenanced the risk ; and when he at length found himself unable to gain her concurrence, he made a second vow that until his fortunes changed — a circumstance that could only be achieved by a new revolution in the Empire, and which was consequently almost beyond hope ; or that he was carried away to his dishonoured grave, he would never again trim his beard nor shave his head. Fatma heard the vow with thankfulness, for she felt that he had at least bent his heart wholly to his fortunes ; and a gleam of joy passed over her wasted features as she remembered that she might yet possess the power of making those fortunes a shade less gloomy.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LAST OF THE JANISSARIES—*continued.*

IT was an hour before noon, three months subsequently to the fatal day which had ruined her son, that Fatma Hanoum having occasion to visit the bazaar in order to buy bread, and to collect the news with which she was wont to lighten the tedious hours of Yusuf's captivity, turned the key in the door of her dwelling; and with a slow and measured step moved aside from the direct road which led to Stamboul, and followed a narrow street of some length, stretching steeply up the side of one of the seven hills on which the city is built.

Arrived before a house of small but cleanly and comfortable appearance, she paused for a

moment ; and had she not been closely veiled, traces of great and violent agitation would have been discernible on her countenance. It was indeed a terrible moment for the heart of Fatma, which owned no idol but Yusuf, for in it she might perhaps be sealing his ruin ; and she painfully felt that she was at all events weaning its best affections from herself. But the mother hesitated not from selfish motives — if she could shed a ray of light over the prison-chamber of her child, it was cheaply purchased at the price of her own regret : sterner and more terrible misgivings assailed her, when she found herself actually on the point of executing a purpose on which she had pondered from the first week of Yusuf's domestication beneath her roof.

“ Inshallah — I trust in Heaven !” she murmured to herself when she at length raised the knocker and beat upon the door ; “ Allah will have mercy on a broken-hearted mother—I will not fear.”

The door fell back, and as she crossed the threshold, she was greeted with the courteous “Bouroum” of the slave who opened it.

Fatma was a well-known and a welcome guest beneath the roof of Haïdè Hanoum ; and the dark eyes of her pretty daughter ever turned lovingly upon the widow of Abdul. It was long since they had looked upon her ; for, during the last few weeks, the women of Stamboul had feared to traverse the streets ; and it was moreover known to the friends of Fatma that she had lost her two brave boys on the day of massacre. On this occasion therefore she was doubly welcome ; and she had scarcely reached the door of the harem when its inmates uttered the kindly “Khosh geldin—you are welcome”—to which she at promptly replied “Khosh buldûk—well-found—”

Room was immediately made for her upon the sofa beside her hostess, while the fair Saïryn seated herself at their feet, with her melancholy gaze fixed anxiously on the visitor.

In the next instant the elder lady clapped her hands, and as the attendant entered, she said softly—“Chibouque cahveh getir—Bring pipes and coffee.” And when her guest had partaken of the sweet scented mocha from the fair hands

of the young Saïryn, and that she had applied her own lips to the ivory mouth-piece of the chibouque, and presented it to her guest, the slave withdrew, and the three friends were left alone.

“ Alhemdullilah — praises be to Allah ! the wife of Abdul is once more under my roof, and upon my sofa : ” commenced the hostess ; “ Evil days have fallen upon us, Effendim ; the sun has been hidden beneath a cloud ; but Allah buyûk der—God is great—it may again shine out.”

“ For me it can gleam only on graves ; ” said Fatma sadly : “ the days that are gone cannot be recalled—Who shall give back the dead ? ”

And her two listeners bowed their heads upon their hands, and echoed : “ Who shall give them back ? ”

“ My youngest was as the gazelle upon the mountain ; ” continued the widow ; “ fleet of foot, and graceful as the blossom that bends to the south wind : he was as a beyzadeh—the son of a lord. Stamboul held not one of nobler bearing—he has died the death of blood, and there are none to avenge him.” And again her

companions beat down, and murmured “ Chok chay — it is hard to bear ! ”

“ For my first-born :—” pursued Fatma Hanoum, encouraged by the voice of sympathy : “ But why should I talk of him ? Was he not as a star during tempest — a light at midnight — a spring in the desert ? Was not his name mighty, and his arm strong ? ”

“ Amān ! amān ! — alas ! alas ! ” sighed forth her auditors.

“ He was fair to look upon, and they who knew him listened to his words, for they were the words of wisdom ; ” again burst forth the old woman ; “ to her whom he loved he would have been as the wild vine that clings even to the death. Think, Saïryn ; ” she said suddenly, as she turned towards the fair girl who sat at her feet, “ think how dear the Hanoum your mother must have been to me, and how my aged eyes must have joyed to look upon your own beauty, when I sought you for his wife — the wife of my best and bravest — of my son Yusuf.”

A smothered sob burst from the gentle girl as she listened ; “ Haif, haif — shame, shame ! ”

she whispered, "that he too should be taken from you."

"And yet, better so;" said Fatma; "better that he should die in the pride of his beauty and of his strength, when he felt that his kismet—his fate, was bright, and that he was beloved; than linger in disgrace and poverty to be a bye-word and a scoff—the rejected of those to whom his love was once a triumph and a boast."

"Can there live one so vile!" exclaimed Saïryn in an accent of generous indignation, as she raised her head proudly, and swept back the long tresses from her brow: "Lives there one whom Yusuf Aga could once have loved, who would desert him now? Ajaib—wonderful! Did Allah people the world with reptiles?"

"Guzel, guzel—good, good :" said Fatma Hanoum: "you speak like one who has never known falsehood, and never suffered wrong—your heart is pure, kizem—my daughter; and your words are pleasant. Oh, that Yusuf, that my son, could rise from his grave to hear them!"

"Listen to me, my mother ;" said the fair

girl ; " I was taught to love the Aga : I looked upon him when he knew not that my eye was at the lattice ; and I needed thenceforth no further teaching. I am worthy to be your daughter, for I shall never love another."

The glance was keen and searching that Fatma Hanoum turned on the young beauty as she ceased speaking ; but the betrothed of Yusuf did not shrink beneath her eye. " Shekiur Allah—praise be to Heaven ;" she said at length as she averted her gaze ; " I am then not alone in my grief ; my Aga has not fallen unwept."

A burst of tears from the melancholy Saïryn was her only answer ; and it was a relief to both when Haïdè Hanoum was summoned from the apartment on some household business, and they were left together.

" Come hither, Saïryn—come hither, my Sultana ;" said the old woman, as the tapestry curtain fell behind her hostess, and the echo of her slippers died away in the gallery beyond ; " You are wise with the wisdom of riper age, and your heart is as the heart of a peri ; I would share with you my joys and my sorrows,

for the sake of him who should have been your husband."

" Speak ! " exclaimed the fair girl ; " torture me not with caution ; speak—Ekhi kateti—there is something !—Tell me all, as you hope for a place in paradise."

" You are young as a spring blossom," pursued the cautious mother, regardless of the emotion of her listener ; " and beautiful as a houri ; Your felech—your constellation may be a proud one. Who shall foretell your fate ! "

" Could any cunning give me back my Aga, the light of my eyes, and the pulse of my heart, I would laugh all other grief to scorn"— broke in Saïryn ; " my heart is in his grave, and the sky of my youth is clouded. Talk not to me of my own beauty, but tell me of your son ; though the tale drown me in tears it will be welcome, for it will be of him."

" Listen then, child of my hope, and star of my evening sky ;" said Fatma Hanoum in a shrill whisper, bending as she spoke towards her listener : " Utter no cry—tell it not to any—not even to the mother who gave you birth, lest the

wind of heaven bear away the tale to those who thirst for the blood of the mighty — Yusuf Aga lives!"

The warning was unnecessary; for, as the startling truth broke upon her, the gentle Saïryn fell back senseless upon her cushions. Yet did not Fatma Hanoun yield to the terror which seized upon her as she witnessed the effect of her intelligence; she rather hailed it as a proof of the deep and undying affection which she coveted for her son; and with her accustomed self-possession she bathed the lips and brow of the happy girl with water, and soon saw her recover from her swoon.

"Ne bilirim — what can I say?" were the first words that she gasped out; "I am his, heart and soul, as when I was first vowed to him — But we must not whisper this, Effendimou — let us be jealous of our secret; say but that you will take me to your bosom, and I will fly to share his griefs. Nay, deny me not" — she added passionately, as the aged woman was about to speak: "I can understand all that you would tell me— Yusuf is a prisoner—shut out from all commerce

with his kind—debarred from the light of day—wasting away his strength in tears and darkness.—Is it not so, my mother? I am prepared for all this—only say that you have room for me in your heart, and I will escape hence, and dwell beneath the same roof as my promised lord—I will be the light to cheer his darkness, and the comfort that shall dry his tears. If my own heart does not deceive me, love can overmaster destiny; and Yusuf Aga may yet be happy. Only tell me that he will not reject me, mother; only promise that he will not spurn my affection; and, from the hour that I enter your dwelling, he shall be my world, and I will never nurse a wish of which he is not the object."

And the beautiful young mourner flung herself at the feet of her companion, listening for the permission to blight her youth and her loveliness, with a wild eagerness that had in it something almost sublime.

"Allah buyûk der—Allah is great!" said the old woman, as the tears streamed from her dim eyes: "it shall be even as you will, my daughter: but think well ere you determine on

so desperate an act. We are poor, very poor—day by day misery and want are creeping on us, and we know not how to stay their steps—Yet, if you will share our poverty—if your love for Yusuf, and the power of your felech indeed urge you to the sacrifice, come to me, and be to me as a daughter; for none save Yusuf can love you as I shall do—” And she folded her arms about the generous girl, and they mingled their tears together.

A week elapsed from the visit of Fatma to the harem of Haïdè Hanoum, when, as she sat one evening in the apartment which touched upon the prison-chamber of Yusuf, her eager eyes glancing at intervals towards the casement, and her head bent forward in the attitude of listening, a low signal, for which she had evidently been prepared, sounded from below, and she hurriedly rose from her sofa to obey it. Not a word was spoken until she returned to her accustomed station; and then a low burst of passionate joy escaped her, as she threw herself on the neck of a shrouded figure by which she had been followed.

“ Is all well, mother ?” asked a sweet and tremulous voice ; “ Does the Aga Effendi know of my coming ? and may I meet him without fear ? Tell me truly, lest I die of shame beneath his frown — ”

“ He knows not of your resolve ;” answered the mother ; “ How could I dare to make his heart leap with joy ere I was assured that you would not repent ? But, Shekiur Allah—praise be to Allah, you are here ; and he will share the joy of paradise when he learns the greatness of your love.”

The trembling girl heard no more. She sank upon the floor with her face buried in her cloak, and her breath came thick and fast as she sobbed out : “ Eh vah ! was this well done ? Shall I not be less than nothing in his sight when he first looks upon me ? ”

“ Allaha es marladek—Heaven preserve you, my daughter ;” was the soothing reply ; “ The earth holds nothing so dear as you will be to Yusuf. Have you not resigned every thing for his sake ? ” and, as she spoke, she withdrew the mantle of the weeping girl, and seated her gently upon the sofa.

"Khosh geldin — you are welcome ; a thousand times welcome ! and were this poor hovel the serail of a Sultan, still should you be its mistress. And now, hearken, my daughter — Yusuf is not far distant : he can even hear the murmur of our voices ; and I will speak to him—" and approaching the wall of the apartment, she said in a louder tone : "Korkma — fear not, my son, although I am not alone — for the first time it is the voice of a friend which comes to you in your prison ; even of one who loves you."

"Kim boo — who is that ?" was the bitter and incredulous rejoinder ; "Who is there on earth save yourself who now wastes a thought on the wretched Yusuf ?"

"Whom would you that it should be ?" asked the old woman, as calmly as her joy would permit her to put the question.

"Alas ! I know not ;" said the despairing prisoner. "Those whom I loved have fallen from me, or have been murdered before my eyes — there lives not one on earth whom I now desire to see ; save, indeed, the maiden who should have been my bride, and that can never be—"

“ Tchabouk, tchabouk—quick, quick—let me fly to your feet Agamou — my Aga —” almost shrieked the excited Saïryn, as the words reached her ear; “ Say not that it can never be, for I am here ! ”

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LAST OF THE JANISSARIES—*continued.*

Two years passed slowly by: and a wretched group sat together on the floor of a narrow room, divested of every sign and appliance of comfort. The ragged sofa which was its only furniture, stretched along three sides of the apartment, and revealed no longer the original pattern of its covering; a battered and discoloured brazier contained a few smouldering ashes, totally inadequate to their purpose; and a coarse earthen pitcher and cup stood a few paces distant, the only visible mean of refreshment for its melancholy occupants.

The most remarkable individual of the party was a man in the prime of life, but wasted by

famine; and with a thick and tangled beard falling to his girdle, which had evidently once been of the deepest black, but which now, like the elf-locks that escaped from beneath his dingy and well-worn turban, was chequered with grey. Beside him sat a woman on whom time and sorrow had alike wrought their bitter will. Her brow was deeply furrowed, and her long sharp features gave indication of a craving which had been often unappeased ; while the cloud that dulled her large dim eye spoke a despair in which words would have been less eloquent.

But there was yet another in this miserable company ; the strong man and the aged woman had not paid the penalty of famine and misery alone. There was yet another, whose unearthly and transparent beauty might well have charmed the gaunt demon from his prey ! It was a young fair woman — so young, and so fair, that she seemed rather like a dream-born vision than a denizen of earth. Her dress was scanty and squalid ; and on her knee she pillow'd a dead infant — a miniature of her own loveliness ; for whom the fountains of life had been dried up by

the gnawing want of the mother. Her dark wild eyes, flashing with a fierce and unnatural light, glanced rapidly from her cold burthen to the face of her wretched husband, and thence back again upon her child : but only by that quick and frenzied look did she venture to ask if all were indeed over ; for she feared the answer that his quivering lips would utter. Suddenly a thought — a memory — a dream of past days, flashed across the mind of Yusuf—for it was indeed Yusuf who sat beside his childless wife — and a sickly smile gleamed for a moment over his pallid face.

“ Mother ;” he said, in a low hollow voice ; “ the Prophet has given me a glimpse of the past — we may yet save my wife — my beloved one — a while longer. Well do I know that it is not for yourself that you mourn, but for her— for the self-sacrificing woman, who has blessed me at the expence of her own misery. In the years when I was free, and a brave man among the warriors, a Bey of the palace came to me one day for gold ; I lent him all that I had : they were but two purses, but they availed him much ; and

he swore by his beard that he would repay them when I claimed the debt. How say you? Will you go to the house of Tasin Bey, and say to him — ‘ My lord, I am the mother of Yusuf Aga, whom, while he lived, you loved; I am old and poor—I lack bread, and can find none—my son lent you two purses — will you not pay them back to her for whom he had hoarded them ? ’ ”

“ Yusuf janum—my soul ; ” faltered out the old woman : “ it is so long since you have had dealings with the great ones of the earth, that you have forgotten of what clay the Prophet made them. Listen to me : to-morrow I will enter beneath the roof of Tasin Bey, and I will tell him that I am the mother of the Aga, who was his friend : if he welcome me to his home, and put bread before me, then will I remind him of the debt ; but, if his brow be cold, and his words few, I will not peril your pride when the avowal would avail nothing. The debtor wears his conscience upon his face ; and even as you read there, so will it be.”

“ You are wise, and I am as nothing before

you :" conceded the heart-worn Yusuf ; " Be it as you have said."

" He may perchance greet me kindly ; " resumed Fatma, her hope growing more strong, as she recalled the friendship which once existed between the young noble and her son ; " And should he do so, the rest will be sure ; and we may yet have rice wherewith to make the pillauf of plenty for our precious Saïryn — For the babe :" she added more sadly, " it is already a spirit sporting in the gardens of Paradise, and sleeping in the hearts of the ever-blooming roses watered by the houris."

" Speak you of my child ?" murmured out a low voice ; " He is a-hungered, and I have no food — bring him bread, and all will yet be well."

The wretched man buried his face in his hands, and groaned aloud.

" Weep not, Agamou — my Aga :" said the fair young mother, laying her dead child softly on the floor beside her, and approaching her husband : " I have no hunger, and he has now ceased to pine : why, then, do you grieve ? We

have suffered much, but, for me, I shall soon fall asleep, for I feel my eyelids heavy ; and you will not awaken me, save to still the wailings of my babe if he should seek for me."

And as Yusuf folded her to his heart, she sank into the deep dreamless slumber which so often precedes the death of famine.

"Allah buyûk der — God is great :" said Yusuf : "but this is almost more than I can bear. Years have passed over me in pain and terror, and for myself I would not murmur even now : but to see her thus ! What can be done, my mother ? — think for me ; for my brain wanders, and I am as a child, not knowing how to guide my steps."

"Bear up yet this night :" urged the aged woman in reply ; "to-morrow the sun may rise unclouded—Who shall say ?"

And he did bear it—and early on the ensuing morning Fatma Hanoum folded her tattered cloak about her, and sped to the dwelling of Tasin Bey ; and, despite the jests of the idle attendants who thronged the entrance-hall, and who jeered alike at her age and at her raiment,

she waited patiently until the Bey passed through the apartment, on his way to the caïque which was waiting to convey him to the palace of the Sultan.

"Ne istersiniz—what do you want, woman?" he asked impatiently, as she placed herself upon his path; "Do you not see that I am in haste?"

"And do you not see on your side that I am in want?" sternly demanded the old woman in her turn: "I shall hold my lord back but an instant in his errand of pride. By the memory of Yusuf Aga, whom you once loved, I come to conjure you to look upon my misery."

"Yusuf Aga died the death of a traitor," said the Bey with a dark frown, "and I will not that my dwelling be polluted by his name; but you are old and needy, and his treason should not be visited upon your grey hairs by one who loved him ere he fell. Step aside, Ef-fendion; I have yet a moment to spare; and you shall tell me the story of your grief."

The indignant Fatma had well nigh vented her disappointed wrath in reproaches when the Bey commenced his address; but, as she raised her

eye to his, she did not read there the same stern expression which sat upon his brow ; and she restrained her anger. Obeying the motion of his hand, she passed silently from the hall to an inner room ; and was shortly followed by the young courtier, who cast down the tapestry curtain of the door behind him as he entered, ere he said hurriedly—

“ What is this ? Are you indeed the mother of Yusuf Aga, my friend ? Why do I see you in the garb of utter want, when he must have told you that I owe him gold ? Did you fear that I should deny the debt ? ”

“ Y’Allah — in the name of the Prophet, no, my lord : ” replied the delighted Fatmia : “ but the ear of the rich is heavy, and the heart of the happy, shut — You ask me why I have been dumb so long — I have no other answer — na to ne — there it is.”

“ You have done me wrong ; ” pursued the Bey : “ nor have you judged more wisely in betraying your errand to my slaves. Know you not that the name of Yusuf Aga is to be blotted from the memory of men ? I may doubt in my turn, if you be indeed his mother.”

"Inshallah ! — the debt is two purses," was the laconic reply of the old woman.

"Hai, Hai — true, true :" said the Bey readily — "and first I will deliver to you the piastres :" and taking an embroidered purse from his girdle, he counted the coin into the trembling hand of the overjoyed Fatma.

"And now ;" he continued, as she hid the treasure among her rags ; "tell me of your gallant son. Often have I wept over his memory ; but, Inshallah — I trust in Allah, I shall yet meet him in Paradise."

"May the houris be long in pouring forth the sherbet of my lord ;" said the aged woman : "May his days on earth be many, and his sorrows few, for Yusuf loved him as a brother ; and nobler heart bled not on that day of murder than that of my noble boy !"

"Did you look on him in death ?" demanded the Bey : "or was he lost among the many who were seen no more ?"

"I watched over him beneath my own poor roof ;" replied the mother : "I saw his bright eye dim, and his bold heart weak—and yet I live."

Her listener paused for a moment, and a strange expression swept across his brow : “ Lingered he long in misery ?” he asked in a shrill whisper.

“ Long, long—look at this withered arm — it upheld him till it failed.”

Again there was a momentary silence, which was broken by the low tones of the courtier : “ Mother,” he said : “ you are poor, and need gold—a wild fancy has come upon me—I could almost dream that your son yet lives—If it be so, deceive me not ; for thus he must, like yourself, be in want and misery. What do you fear ? Did I not love him well ? and is not my hand open ? Why should you cheat me with false words, as though I had been one of those who wrought him evil ? Nay,” he added, more peremptorily : “ it is too late to throw the mantle of falsehood over the garb of truth ; you tremble, and your limbs fail you—Otour, otour—sit, sit, mother—my friend Yusuf lives !”

“ What shall I say ?” exclaimed Fatma : “ my lord is as one who has stood behind the curtain of knowledge, and read the characters of

the wise men—it is even as he has said—Yusuf Aga lives.”

“ And where ?” eagerly enquired the young noble : “ Tell me where I may once more look upon, and listen to him—my heart yearns to my friend.”

“ La illaha illallah—there is but one Allah : ” murmured the mother beneath her breath : “ Yusuf is saved—Saïryn is saved—and I may go down to the place of tombs in peace. Amān, amān—alas, alas—why came not this help from heaven in time to turn aside the hand of the destroying angel from their precious babe ! ”

“ Tell me, mother ; ” repeated the Bey earnestly : “ tell me only the retreat of Yusuf, that I may hasten to mingle my tears with his.”

“ Nay, not so, agam—my lord ; ” said Fatma gravely, as a chill crept over her heart : “ I have already betrayed to you a secret which was scarce mine own : more I dare not do ; but I will pour into the ear of my wretched son the glad story of your kindness, and it shall then be even as he wills.”

“ To-morrow, then ;” said the noble, as he moved towards the door ; “ I will urge you no further now : the heart of Yusuf shall decide the rest. I am high in favour with the Padishah, and who shall say that the pardon of your son may not be won by his early friend.”

“ Allah es marladek — Heaven take you into its holy keeping :” sobbed out the transported mother : “ There is but one God, and Mahomet is his Prophet.”

“ Farewell, Effendim :” smiled the Bey ; “ I can delay my departure no longer ; but I pray you leave not my house until you have dipped your spoon into my pillauf.” And clapping his hands, he summoned a slave, and bade him lead the aged Fatma to the door of the harem, and commend her to the care of the women, that she might not depart from beneath his roof fasting. “ Tell not your errand to any :” he added, as he turned to depart ; “ there is yet much to be done ere the tale be bruited in the city streets.” And he hurried to his boat, followed by a blessing such as few have ever breathed.

Fatma Hanoum feasted—withstood the thousand questions which assailed her on all sides from the women of the Bey; and finally set forth on her return to her own wretched dwelling, laden with food, and bright with hope. Once more there was joy in the prison-chamber of the wasted Aga—once more—and how cruel a proof was this of the utterness of their previous despair—they talked to each other of *the future*—hitherto they had not dared to do it! With such a friend—by whom, even amid prosperity and happiness, he had been unforgotten, for what might Yusuf not hope? Even the childless mother, imbibing a portion of the delight which beamed upon the brow of her husband, pressed her stiffened infant to her breast, and smiled a sickly smile. Alas! none could give her back her dead!

“Mother;” said Yusuf earnestly: “can it indeed be true that I shall again look upon one of the friends of my happy days? It is as a promised light from heaven! It is so long since I have listened to the voice of sympathy, save from the lips of those who were suffering for my sake,

that I know not if I shall outlive the joy !
 Delay him not, my mother, lest my heart burst
 with the suspense : lead him here to-morrow,
 that I may commence a new existence, and feel
 that I have yet a tie to the bright world on
 which I have not looked for long and weary
 years."

"Have you no fear, my son?" ventured
 the old woman : "It is a mighty trust!"

"Does he not deserve it at my hands?" asked
 Yusuf in reply ; "I were base, vile, if I could
 doubt him. No, my mother ; the Prophet is
 weary of our tears, and we shall yet be happy.
 And you, my Sairyn, my beautiful betrothed,
 who have lavished on the captive and dishonoured
 Yusuf all the love that you had vowed only to
 the bold and favoured Aga, you shall be as the
 light of my eyes, and as the pulse of my heart,
 when the beam of heaven once more shines
 upon my brow, and the blessing of Allah is
 upon my fortunes. Tell me, Sultana of my
 soul, shall it not be thus?"

And the beautiful girl hid her face upon his
 shoulder, and murmured out : "So shall it be,
 if the Prophet hear my prayer!"

The eyes of Yusuf did not close in sleep during that long, long night : but he lay upon his rude cushions, buried in sweet and retrospective thought. All the proudest days of his strong youth passed in array before him, and he remembered the high aspirations and ambitious hopes with which he had been used to colour his existence. Hastily he reviewed the hour which prostrated his fortunes — he could not bear the memory—and with a smile, mingled with a tear which would not be suppressed, the picture terminated with the fair creature who was pillow'd on his bosom — the victim of her holy and earnest love !

The morning dawned at length — the blessed day was come which was to restore to the heart and arms of Yusuf the friend of his manhood ; and the hour was yet early at which the aged Fatma started on her anxious expedition. She tarried long—or it seemed long to the weary watcher whom she had left: but when she came, the tale she had to tell repaid him for all his suffering.

Kindly and courteously had the Bey received

her: again she had eaten of his pillauf, and drank of his cup: he had listened to all the story of Yusuf's sufferings; and vowed on the Korân to terminate them. Already had he asked a boon of the Sultan, who had smiled upon his suit; and Fatma felt that the boon could be no other than the pardon of his friend. Affairs of state detained him; but, his duty done, he would hasten to the presence of the captive, soon to be so no longer; and meanwhile a slave had followed the footsteps of the old woman, and then returned to his master, to serve him as his guide.

Again and again did the happy Fatma tell her tale; and the theme was still unchanged when a heavy stroke on the door of the house summoned her to receive the expected guest; and, hastily snatching a shawl from the sofa, and folding it about her face, she descended to draw the bolt.

There was the silence of a moment: and the heart of Yusuf beat high as he sprang from the floor to meet his friend; "He is here, Saïryn; janum — my soul, he is here!" he exclaimed

with a burst of his former joyousness — but his transport was short-lived. A piercing shriek rang from below — it was the voice of Fatma ; and in another moment the tramp of many feet sounded upon the stairs !

In an instant the yataghan of Yusuf was in his hand, and he stood glaring like a roused tiger in the direction of the sound. “ Too late ! ” —he shouted in his despair : “ Oh, that you had not tarried, my friend ! my friend ! Had you speeded, you might yet have saved me ! ”

But as the agonized cry escaped from the lips of the doomed man, the generous dream was at an end ; for, on the threshold of the chamber stood Tasin Bey, surrounded by a band of armed attendants. For a moment the arch-traitor paused, in doubt that the wretched object before him could indeed be Yusuf Aga ! For a moment he remained paralyzed with horror as he gazed upon the gaunt and haggard wretch, who, with elf-locks hanging matted upon his shoulders, and a tangled and loathsome beard depending to his girdle, his cheeks sunk and hollow, and his eyes bright with a fierce and blinding light,

met him midway of the apartment ; his weapon raised over his head, and his blue and livid lips parted above his fast-clenched teeth !

Ere he had recovered his horror, Yusuf struck—With a yell like that of a hunted savage his weapon was buried to the hilt in the heart of one of the party who had advanced a step in front of his comrades ; and it seemed as though the blow had loosed the spell which had bound the senses of their leader ; for ere the desperate Aga could withdraw his weapon, the Bey had pronounced the fatal word, and instantly a score of his followers rushed upon their victim. But the soul of Yusuf appeared to have called back its strength in his last moment of trial, and he struggled like a demoniac—Suddenly there was a frightful gushing groan—a heavy fall—and he lay senseless at the feet of his persecutors — yet no steel had touched—no cord had polluted him—he lay bathed in blood, but it had gushed from his mouth and nostrils — Nature, so long neglected, had been overtaxed in this hour of passion, and he had burst an artery.

When they raised him up, he was beyond

their power. Allah, in his own good time, had taken to himself the Last of the Janissaries !

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON:
F. SHOBERL, JUN., 61, RUPERT STREET, HAYMARKET.

THE
ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

BY
MISS PARDOE,

**AUTHOR OF "THE CITY OF THE SULTAN,"
"THE RIVER AND THE DESART," &c.**

"'Mid many things most new to ear and eye,
The pilgrim rested here his weary feet,
And gazed around on Moslem luxury."

BYRON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

**LONDON :
HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1839.**

LONDON:
F. SHOBERL, JUN., 51, RUPERT-STREET, HAYMARKET.

CONTENTS
OF
THE THIRD VOLUME.

	PAGE
Part the First	1
The Kingdom of the Mice	33
Part the Second	121
The Pasha's Daughter	148
Part the Third	207
The Adventures of the Barber of Bassora	224
Part the Fourth and Last	322

THE
ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

IMMEDIATELY after the mid-day prayer, when the intense heat tempted a great portion of the inhabitants of the city to spend an hour in sleep, Maniolo polo, on the morrow of his visit to the Theriarki Tcharchi, again bent his steps thitherward, to seek an interview with the almè.

As he was rich and generous, he met with no opposition from the master of the tavern, who conducted him without comment to the door of an apartment which was veiled by a screen of dark-coloured baize; and here, having called

2 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

loudly on the name of Nevrestè, he left Maniolopolo standing, while he shuffled back to his rug in the public room.

A shrill and peevish voice was soon heard in reply ; and the slippers of a woman, hastily assumed, sounded upon the floor behind the screen, which was snatched aside, and the young Greek found himself confronted by an aged and wrinkled woman, whose mass of wiry hair checkered with gray had escaped from the confinement of a bright yellow handkerchief, painted in gaudy masses of colour, and flowed upon her shoulders ; her dress was of huge-patterned furniture chintz, girt round her waist with a well-worn cachemire, which had once been costly enough to cincture the loins of a Pasha ; her trowsers were of blue muslin, to which a few patches of tarnished foil yet adhered as if in mockery ; her legs were bare, and her whole appearance so compounded of meretriciousness and squalour, that Maniolopolo had some difficulty in subduing the sensation of disgust with which he looked on her.

“ Bè hey—What’s this ? ” she asked sharply ; “ Had we not enough of your loud brawling last night to bring down the Cadi and his gang upon us, and to keep us waking, that you return at

mid-day ? Go, go, Effendim, the almè sleep ; and they have need to do so, for they dance to-night in the harem of the Tchorbadji."

" I do not seek the almè ;" replied Maniolo polo gently : " it was yourself of whom I came in search."

The crone laughed : " Evallah — to be sure ! so says every young haramzadeh whom I find upon my threshold ; ' Mother, it is you I want ' — but I have lived among the mountains, young sir, and can see beyond the flight of an arrow."

" May your eyes never fail !" whispered the Greek, as he pressed a gold coin against her open palm ; " I come to seek that of you, in which, if they be not keen and quick, you will lack the power to serve me."

" And what wills my lord ?" asked Nevrestè more courteously, as she twisted her long hair once more beneath her head-kerchief, and tightened the shawl about her waist ; " some rose-bud of a sheltered tree to which he would fain be the sunshine, to be told of his passion ; or—"

" Ajaib — wonderful !" interposed Maniolo polo, affecting surprise at her discernment.

" You have indeed guessed my meaning,

4 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

mother — How say you ? will you undertake so sweet a mission ?”

The hag replied by grasping her throat with her skinny fingers, and nodding her head significantly.

“ Min Allah — Heaven forbid !” said the Greek ; “ you are too keen and quick-witted to incur so direful a penalty. Listen to me ;” and he enforced his request with a second piece of gold, which at once secured the attention of the old woman ; “ I have a sister, a slave in the Pasha’s harem——”

“ The Pasha’s harem !” broke in Nevrestè in affright ; “ and who am I that I should venture into the secret apartments of a Satrap, and carry a blight to his roses ?”

“ Nay, nay ; you talk idly ;” said Maniolo polo impatiently ; “ do I not tell you that I only seek to inform my sister of my vicinity — my young and innocent sister — the play-mate of my infancy, the delight of my boyhood, my bitterly-wept and regretted sister — my only one !”

“ Humph ! there is some reason in that, to be sure ;” muttered the old crone, while a shade of something which almost looked like feeling flitted over her brow, and then as suddenly dis-

appeared ; and left it cold and rigid, and stony as before, like the marble across which a struggling sunbeam has flickered for an instant ; “ I too had a brother once, an only one, as you say ; but he died — he was cut down by an Egyptian scymitar (may the arm be withered that wielded it !) and it was years ago, before I had forgotten how to weep ; and by the soul of your father, I shed tears enough ; but all that is gone by now, and I am the mother of a troop of almè, without a home, or a kinsman ; living among gibes and blows, and curses, with a scanty pillauf, and a tattered veil—but ey vah—mercy on us ! what dirt am I eating to talk thus ? The seal is set upon every man’s forehead at his birth, and as it was written, it will be. Bana bak—look at me, young sir ; do I not seem like one who can bear a heavy burthen yet without falling under it ? ” And the bitter laugh with which she directed the attention of Maniolopolo to her squalid wretchedness rang painfully on his ear, as he attempted to murmur out some common-place about better days and a brighter fate.

“ Tush, tush ;” interposed the old woman with a wild smile ; “ string no fine sentences together to hang upon my rags ; foucaralk chanumdr—poverty is my glory— You young bey-

6 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

zadehs know nothing of the gay immunity of poverty. It is your great men who are slaves; while we, the refuse of the city, the wanderers of the land, the outcasts of society, we are the free — no codgea-bashi lifts the latch of our dwellings to collect tribute; no latticed and bolted harem fetters our will; no saraf ever runs away with our hoarded gold; we come and go as we list; our teskara (passport) needs no signature but our own; and every hedge-side or empty tomb is a menzil khaneh (post-house) equal to our wants — So no more sugared words to Nevrestè, who is as much beyond the pity of every stranger with whom she comes in contact during her roving life, as she is indisposed to accept it. Gold! young sir; let your consolation be offered in gold — that is an universal language, never misunderstood. — And now to business: what would you ask of me?"

" My request is simple: I would see my sister, and I seek from you the opportunity of doing so."

" Mashallah! is that all? You would lift the screen, and tread the carpets of a Pasha's harem! You are mad, stark mad, the veriest delhibashi — prince of madmen, in the province. Have you no desire to wear a gray beard, that

you give the measure of your throat so early ? I will not work for your ruin, you are too young and too handsome for the bowstring."

" Allah Kerim—He is merciful ! " said Maniolo polo : " I trust in him."

" Allah ! Allah ! yes, yes ;" replied the old crone peevishly ; " but let your words and your actions be alike reasonable — throw the mantle from your head, and see clearly for once ; and then I shall hear no more of the Pasha's harem."

" I am resolved ;" said the young Greek moodily."

" And will you swear to this story of the sister ? "

" I will."

" And her name is——? "

" Katinka ;" replied Maniolo polo : " by birth a Sciote, but long dwelling in Circassia."

" What do you tell me !" exclaimed Nevrestè hastily ; " are you indeed the brother of the young Greek slave of whom I have heard so much—Ajaib—wonderful ! They say that she reads the Koran like a Moullah, writes verses which would not disgrace a Hafiz, sings like a bulbul, and dances like one of my own almè, —Young Sir, by the grave of your mother, is all this true ? "

8 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

“ All ;” said Maniolopolo ; “ and she has moreover the warmest heart and the quickest wit in all Roum ;* and the brightest eye, and the lightest foot. — How say you ? Will you not assist me in looking on her once more ?”

“ Ne apalum—what can I do ? I have received no summons from the Pasha ; and how may I present myself unbidden at the palace ?”

“ Nay ! now you laugh at my beard ;” said the young Greek : “ have you not in your band one of the loveliest houri out of Paradise ; and would not a hint to the Aga Baba——”

“ Yavash, yavash—softly, softly, Effendim ;” interposed Nevrestè ; “ I wish to draw the eyes of no Aga Baba in the country on the beautiful Mherpirwir ;† she is to me as the purple lily, a rare and precious thing ; and I love her like a mother — there is no maiden in the bright band so dear to me as Mherpirwir.”

“ Did you call me, Mother ?” asked a sweet voice, as the coarse screen was drawn aside, and a face as fresh and fair as a May morning suddenly appeared behind it ; “ I am here.”

“ Nay, nay ;” said the old woman hastily but not unkindly ; “ I want you not, kizem—my daughter ; I called you not ; is it ever thus with

* Turkey.

† Nurse of Love.

you — while the others sleep, you watch ; while the others idle, you toil for all. Go in, Mher-pirvir, go in ; I have business with the Effendi, and shall be with you presently."

The fair girl bent her head in token of obedience, but ere she retired, cast one hurried glance at the stranger ; their eyes met, and those of the young beauty fell before the earnest look of the Greek. With the instinctive tact of a woman she at once perceived how deeply Maniologolo was impressed by her excelling loveliness, and she may well be pardoned if she lingered in her retreat.

The almè was about sixteen years of age, in all the glow and glory of a beauty such as is seldom looked upon. Her long dark hair fantastically braided with beads and ribbons, and intermixed with bright-coloured ribbons, fell almost to her feet, and was swept back from a brow of dazzling whiteness, surmounting eyes of intense light and lustre. Her figure was slight and graceful, and her expression soft and somewhat melancholy. To discover all this, one glance sufficed ; and had Maniologolo been less preoccupied, and had the fair creature before him been other than she was—an almè—an outcast — a wanderer among men, to whom her

beauty was a jest, and her youth a snare—he felt as though he could have sought a haven in her love, and a Paradise in her smiles.

The dark screen fell from her hand ; and as she disappeared, it seemed to the young Greek as though the light had suddenly failed. For a moment he stood silently gazing on the veiled portal through which she had passed, but only for a moment, for the voice of Nevrestè soon recalled him from his reverie.

“ Ay, ay, look your fill—her beauty may well fix the eye of a young gallant, whose heart, like the blossom of the rose-tree, opens to the first sunshine that flashes on it ; but you came not for this ; nor can you linger here all day to set the tongues of the whole city wagging on old Nevrestè and her troop of almè—Wallah ! You have seen her, and do you still talk to me of the Pasha and his Aga Baba ?”

“ Nay, chide me not, mother ;” said Maniolo polo deprecatingly ; “ the Pasha has a fair young wife—as fair as Mherpirwir ; and it is said that he loves her as the men of this land seldom love a woman : he will look upon your houri only as a bright shape whose gracefulness can charm the eye of his young bride, and will pour gold into her lap, and forget her.”

The aged woman stood for a moment buried in thought, and then abruptly and steadily lifting her eyes to the excited countenance of her companion, she said slowly : “ Na to ne—there it is — at length I have read the dream, and the truth is in the hollow of my hand. Effendim, you love the Pasha’s wife !”

The address was so sudden and so unlooked-for that Maniolopolo was totally unprepared with a reply, and his confusion confirmed the wily and shrewd old woman in her suspicions. “ My son ;” she pursued gravely : “ I know not why I feel thus interested in your fortunes — I thought that my heart had long been seared, but now I see that it can yet beat even for a stranger—What are you about to dare ? Even were it the mere idle caprice of a young wild spirit which prompted you to put your head under the Pasha’s foot, you might well be prepared never again to lift it from the earth ; but if it be as I suspect—and I am one who has read for years the sable page of passion—that you are hurried on to ruin by a vision which never can be realized, ponder well your purpose ; for be assured that cunningly as you may hope to weave your web of wiles, that ruin will come at last.”

12 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

“ Hipsi birdir—so be it—It will be welcome, if the price must be paid ;” said Maniolopolo almost sternly.

“ And yet, you are young—and the grove shelters many birds of soft note and bright plumage, even if the bulbul be not there ;” urged Nevrestè.

The Greek smiled bitterly.

“ Pek ahi, dostoum — it is well, my friend ;” replied the old woman, who required no words to read his meaning ; “ And now, tell me ; wherefore should I risk the same ruin ?—you are a stranger : until last night I never looked upon you—and last night, how did we meet ? amid broil, and brawl, and intemperance, and riot : you will reply that my days are numbered, and that their remnant can be of little value, and I can pardon you the taunt, for you do not, you cannot know, in your bright years of strength and pride, how decaying nature clings to her ruined shrine, and hugs the fragments of her own beauty as they fall from her. It is strange that I waste so many words upon you — strange ! — but let us part now, and if you have parents in your own land who would weep over their lost son, go in peace, and forget the madness that has sprung up in your spirit.”

" I have none to mourn me — none to weep for me ; " said the young man.

" Away then, away — and be just to yourself — the bird that has no mate spreads a wider wing, and takes a bolder flight."

" You counsel me in vain ; " said Maniolopolo : " the die is cast — derdunden oldum beigoud — my torment makes me mad ; forget your suspicions, mother : and remember that they are but suspicions — recall the days when you had a brother whom you loved ; and help me once more to look upon a sister who has been long lost to me."

" Delhibashi ! " exclaimed Nevrestè impatiently ; " what would you ask of me ? "

" Even to join your troop — I will wear any disguise — I will obey any behest — I will pay every effort which you make for me with gold. Nay, look not so scared, mother ; I am young, and your skill will surely suffice to make an almè of a sakal-siz." *

The old woman stood lost in thought for a time, but at length she broke forth with an earnest : " No, no — I cannot, I dare not — you know not what you ask ; are not the almè trained from childhood to their graceful trade ;

* Youth, literally " no-beard."

and would you cast dirt upon my head by betraying your madness to every looker-on? Did you not see Mherpirwir but a moment back? Would you stand beside her on the carpet of the Pasha, and hope to escape?"

" Not so, mother ; I would be the massaldghi* of your troop ; give me a veil and a turban, an Arab drum, and a heavy mantle ; dye my hands with henna, and veil my shoulders with the flowing tresses of a young beauty ; and while the almè repose between their dances, I will win the ear of the Pasha's harem with wild tales, and earn gold for you with a cunning tongue. Wallah billah ! you shall carry a heavy purse when you leave the city. And here, jaguir benum — my guardian angel — here is where-withal to provide for me such garments as you may deem fitting."

" Yavash, yavash — softly, softly, young man ;" said Nevrestè ; " I am not a lover, and I cannot travel so swiftly : but we will see what can be done ;" and she deposited her new gains with the first offering of her companion in the folds of her tattered girdle ; " Mherpirwir shall decide if we may venture our necks so near the grasp of the capidji-bashi ; enter this room on

* Professional Story-teller.

the right, and I will come to you in a moment. I have already told you that we go to-night to the harem of the Tchorhadji ; and when the almè awaken, they will find plenty of employment in preparing for this visit."

Maniolopolò obeyed, and instantly found himself in a gloomy apartment, overthrown with the paraphernalia of the Terpsichorean troop. There were bouquets of artificial flowers, most inartificially wrought, small citerns and guitars, and a sort of rude castanet of rosewood ; gaily coloured veils of gauze, girdles of cachemire, and slippers of velvet worked with gold and beads. A tambourine, fantastically ornamented with pendant ribbons, lay on the divan near the window ; and Maniolopolò amused himself during the absence of the old woman with this toylike instrument, which was familiar to his hand ; and, as he did so, his thoughts flew back to the happy time when, to its rattle, he had led the graceful romäika, and taught the beautiful Carimfil to dream bright dreams of his lost and regretted land.

He was still absorbed in his occupation, when an astonished " Mashallah ! " sounded close beside him, and he perceived that Nevrestè and the young beauty had entered the apartment

unobserved, and were gazing on him with unfeigned gratification.

“ Why this is well, khatoun—my darling ! ” said the old woman ; “ You handle the tambourine like a high-priest of Anirān at the bridal of a Sultana ! How say you, Mherpirwir, my pearl ? If the veil and the antery become him like the instrument, may we not venture something to pleasure him ? ”

“ The Effendi is master ; ” said the almè in a low sweet tone ; “ If he seeks my aid I am ready.”

“ May your beauty never decrease, janum—my soul ! ” exclaimed Maniolopolò ; for which wish he was recompensed by a deep blush, and a faint smile ; “ under your auspices I am sure of success — look you — should you need a minstrel to vary the charm of your gracefulness, I am your slave ; ” and he seized one of the guitars, and sang in a sweet subdued voice a well-known fable, in the musical words of Hafiz :—

There was a bright and a sunny sky
Spread over a laughing land,
But one small vapour was floating by,
Where the wild wave kissed the strand :
And as it passed o'er the ocean-swell,
A rain-drop from the dark cloud fell.

“ Alas !” the limpid moisture sighed,
As it clave the yielding air;
“ And must I perish in that salt tide,
And die unregarded there ?
Hard is my fate to be thus riven
From my glorious place 'mid the blue of Heaven !”

Down, down it fell ; but ere the tide
Touched the bright sand of the shore,
An oyster that thirsted, opened wide
Its pearl-encrusted door ;
And by the soft breathing of the air,
The limpid drop was wafted there.

Time passed — and then a fisher came,
And from that oyster drew
A precious prize, whose wondrous fame
Through many a region flew ;
The rain-drop had become a gem,
To deck a monarch's diadem !

“ Or, should you not love the monotony of—”
“ Nay, say not so ;” interposed the almè
eagerly ; “ say not so—there is no maiden in the
band with such a voice — I will answer for you
with my head. Is it not so, mother ?”

“ Bakalum — we shall see :” answered Ne-
vrestè quietly ; “ put your veil upon the beyza-
deh, and let us see if he can teach those dark
eyes of his as much softness as he has taught his
tones. Hand hither those long tresses that Gu-
beide has flung down so heedlessly in yonder

18 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

corner ; and bid Giadilla lend you her robe ; she is the tallest of the band—There, go, and be speedy in your return. And you, young sir," she added, as the girl disappeared across the threshold ; " look towards me, unless you are anxious to make a mirror of the screen, and thus delay your purpose by gazing after a vision that has vanished."

With a silent smile Maniolopolo obeyed ; and on the return of the almè, the last touch was given to his costume, and the disguise declared to be perfect. Mherpirwir clasped her little hands in wonder, and whispered that he was a subject for the sunny foreground of a Benuzzer ; but all the skill and patience of the fair girl failed to make the handsome young Greek move like an almè, and ultimately the attempt was abandoned in despair ; and it was decided that his guitar must be his dependence, coupled with his talents as a massaldjhi, of which they were content to accept his assurance.

The lovely Mherpirwir was zealous in her services ; she taught the new pupil a thousand little coquettish graces ; showed him the exact shade of the henna which must decorate his fingers, and the precise curve that he must give to his eyebrows ; laughed heartily at the languish-

ments by which he endeavoured to subdue the flashing of his dark eyes, and the mincing step, and unaccustomed slide of the embroidered slipper ; but occasionally she checked her mirth to bestow on him an encouraging smile, and a murmured word of approbation.

“ Mashallah ! you do credit, Effendim, to your Kaftandji ousta !* Fling your veil a little more lightly from your brow, and do not entangle the fringe of your sleeve in the buttons of your antery. It would be well too if you did not carry your head quite so high ; remember that you are but an awali,† and that you must be humble and modest when you tread the carpets of the great. Look you, mother, how well the beyzadeh comprehends my meaning ; and how thoroughly he reads his lesson.”

“ Allemdullilah ! the risk can be but slight :” replied the old woman ; “ if he will promise to be prudent ; and he will do well to join us to-night when we visit the ladies of the Tchorbadji, in order that his task may sit more easy when he has more at stake.”

After a moment’s hesitation, Maniopololo consented to this arrangement ; and then flinging off the disguise in which he had been enveloped,

* Mistress of the Wardrobe. † Singing-woman.

20 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

he bade adieu to Nevrestè, and her pretty companion until twilight, and slowly sauntered back to the Fendûk,* in which he had established himself.

As he moved along, he could not repress the misgivings which intruded themselves on his imagination, and made his pulses quicken and his heart grow sick. He well knew that for the Greek who invades the harem of the Moslem, and who fails in his disguise, there is no mercy ; and although he felt that, in his interview with his adored Carimfil, the bliss of beholding one so dearly loved and so long lost would uphold him, he dreaded the trial which awaited him in the harem of the Tchorbadji. The die was, however, cast ; and he resolved to abandon himself to the guidance of his new friends.

* Inn.

CHAPTER II.

THE day slowly passed away ; for to the anxious, time ever seems to move with folded wings, and to slumber on his scythe ; but at length the hours waned, and he returned to the Theriaki Tcharchi to fulfil his destiny.

As he entered, he was met on the threshold by the old woman, who silently beckoned him onward, and conducted him to an apartment whence the sounds of laughter, mingled with the voice of song, and the rattling of castanets, came joyously to his ear. The screen was flung aside, the portal passed, and he stood among the almè, who were already adorned for their evening's task. One fair girl occupied the centre of the floor, her arms were raised above her head,

and in her right hand she held a tambourine, whence the long streaming ribbons fell, iris-tinted, in bright confusion, and mingled with the soft tresses of her raven hair ; her little feet were bare, and her slight willow-like figure appeared to bend beneath the weight of the fairy instrument, while her eyes rested fondly on a young beauty who was treading a graceful measure to the clashing of her castanets. All were diversely employed, save one ; and that one was Mherpirwir, who, reclining on her cushions, her fair cheek pillow'd on her hand, and her gaze turned anxiously towards the entrance of the apartment, was aroused from her reverie by the arrival of Maniolopol, whom she welcomed with a blush which dyed her brow to the same tint as the glowing roses that rested on it.

In a moment all was confusion ; every almè of the troop insisted on lending her aid towards the completion of a masquerade so novel and so exciting ; and had Maniolopol been a Moslem, he might well have imagined that he had been transported to the Paradise of the Prophet, and was tended by the houri, without the preliminary ceremony of dissolution.

“ And by what name shall we call our new sister ? ” asked Mherpirwir, as she gave the last

graceful fold to the cachemire girdle of the young Greek ; “ We might name her Kamil,* but that those dark eyes which go wandering hither and thither like hadjis† bewildered in the desert, are not quite sober enough to suit with such a title. Ey vah ! who has a head for names ? You, Lèbè, who are the best poet of the troop, have you no suggestion to make ? ”

“ I would call him Sèidika ; ”‡ said the laughing girl who had been thus summoned to the council ; “ for does he not risk his life to look upon his mistress ? ”

“ Taib ! — well said ; ” exclaimed the old woman ; and “ Taib ! Taib ! ” was murmured by all the young beauties by whom she was surrounded.

At length the moment came when the fair troop were to transport themselves to the harem of the Tchorbadji ; and Maniolopolò was soon shrouded like the rest in a long and ample feridjhè or mantle of dark cloth, while his face was concealed by a shawl ; and in this guise he followed Nevrestè with his instrument in his hand, and a wild beating at his heart.

The Tchorbadji resided beyond the walls of the town, in a spacious house on the edge of the

* Modest.

† Pilgrims.

‡ Faithful.

plain ; his gardens were traversed by a bright river, and a gilded boat danced on the ripple beneath the leafy screen of old and majestic trees. An avenue of maples, whose gnarled and twisted branches had resisted the storms of a century, led up to the house nearly from the city gates, and threw a gloom around which fell heavily on the spirit of the young Greek. But the almè were less impressible ; and as they moved along, they gaily bandied jests, and ventured inferences and speculations on the liberality of the Tchorbadji, which extorted an occasional smile from Maniolopollo, anxious as he was. Snatches of wild songs, and wilder stories escaped them also, as it seemed involuntarily : their wandering and uncertain life had taught them the philosophy of present enjoyment, and the futility of foreboding ; and they lived, and jested, and laughed, as though time had no morrow, or that they could furl his wings at their own giddy will.

Mherpirwir alone was staid and silent ; she walked slowly with bent head, like one who indulges in deep and pensive thought ; and occasionally her dark eyes flashed out from behind their jealous screen as she glanced hastily and anxiously towards Maniolopollo. But ere long

her abstraction drew down upon her the laughter of her companions, and she aroused herself, and mingled in the idle conversation of the party, or held a whispered and momentary communion with Nevrestè, until they stood before the gate of the Tchorbadji's harem.

Loud and earnest was their welcome as they sprang over the threshold into a spacious hall paved with various coloured marbles, where the plashing of water and the song of birds made the air vocal. A richly gilded door at the upper end was flung back, and through the opening they caught a delicious glimpse in the moonlight of trees, and flowers, and fountains, spreading far away into the distance. Groupes of slaves, many of them young and beautiful, were hurrying to and fro ; and each as she passed had a gay word and a gayer smile for the almè. The sounds of music came soothingly from an inner apartment ; and a soft stream of moonshine played along the marble floor, and dyed it with the rich tints which it pilfered as it passed from the crimson hangings of the numerous casements. Altogether it was a scene of enchantment ; and it was not without regret that Maniolopolo followed the example of his companions, and obeyed the summons of a smiling

slave who waited to conduct them to the presence of her mistress.

“ Khosh geldin — you are welcome,” uttered in a low sweet voice which fell softly on the ear of the young Greek, were the first sounds that greeted him as he found himself in an apartment flashing with gold fringe and embroidery, and immediately opposite to a lovely woman who reposed on a splendid divan of velvet, surrounded by her attendants, while two fair children were sporting on a cushion at her feet ; and earnest was the tone in which he joined in the “ Khosh buldûk — well found” of the almè, as they bent before her in homage.

Ere long the Tchorbadji arrived. He was a man with whose beard time had toyed until it had withered in his grasp ; his brow was deeply interlined, and from the corners of his keen and fierce black eyes a puckered mass of minute wrinkles spread even to his temples. His nose was high and salient, and his upper lip was hidden by the thick and grizzled mustache which adorned it. He was of middle height, but of great muscular power ; and Maniopolo at the first glance felt doubly desirous to preserve his disguise unsuspected.

Two by two the almè moved forward and

:

performed their graceful evolutions, which won for them many a “ Mashallah !” and “ Aferin !”* from the Tchorbadji, and a murmur of commendation from his fair young wife ; but when at last, and alone, Mherpirwir flung off her veil, and bounded into the centre of the floor, where she stood for an instant like a startled fawn listening for a coming footstep, the Tchorbadji half rose from his sofa, and withdrew the chibouque from his lips to gaze on her. The tapers by which the apartment was illuminated threw their full blaze upon her as she rested for a moment without stirring either eye or limb, and then suddenly springing back a pace or two, twirled her tambourine above her head, as though the joyousness of her young spirit could ring out through its silver bells.

It was now that Maniolopolo aroused himself to play his part in the pageant ; and suffering the shawl in which he had been shrouded to fall from his head, but without rising from the carpet on which he was reclining, he watched the moment when the fair Mherpirwir changed the measure of her movements to a slower and more melancholy chaunt ; and catching up the cadence where she had suffered it to die away, accom-

* Well done.

28 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

panied her languid and exquisite performance with the wild ballad whose action it was intended to portray.

Cobah ! Cobah !* where art thou now ?
We have sought thee in vain on the mountain's brow,
We have looked for thee, love, where the stream runs clear.
Cobah ! Cobah ! thou art not here—
The wind sighs its grief thro' the cypress bough,
Cobah ! beloved one ! where art thou ?

She is gone ! she is gone ! but where ?
Go ask the earth's starry flowers—
Where the sunbeams of yesterday rest, she's there,
She can never again be ours—
Life's sweetest and brightest things,
The joys we have loved and lost,
Exist in the land where the spirits' wings
Catch Heaven's bright beam the most—

Why did she pass away,
Before her sweet youth was o'er,
Like the flower which drinks in the sunbeam to-day,
And to-morrow exists no more ?
She loved, till she lived in that light alone
That her own pure soul had made—
And she withered because the cherished one
Who had been to her both breath and sun
Left her to pine and fade—
Summer days pass—earth's blossoms die—
Heaven's stars fall from the azure sky—
Our joys all wither one by one—
Cobah is gone ! Cobah is gone !

* Morning star.

As he commenced his task, Maniolopolo breathed quickly, for the keen eye of the Tchorbadji was on him ; but as the dance proceeded, he became thralled by the consummate skill of the dancer, and involuntarily flung his whole soul into his voice, while a continuous murmur of admiration and applause escaped the spectators. As the song ceased, the almè seemed to die away with the strain, her head drooped, her arms hung listlessly at her side, the tambourine fell from her hand, and she stood the very picture of despair.

In the enthusiasm of the moment the wife of the Tchorbadji drew a ring from her finger, and placed it in the hand of a slave, who presented it to Mherpirwir ; while the host himself flung a purse into the lap of Maniolopolo, which he instantly transferred to the keeping of Nevrestè. Never was success more perfect ; and as the fair girls stood in groupes upon the bright-coloured carpets, the young Greek thought he had never beheld any spectacle so lovely. The gorgeously attired beauty on the divan was radiant with youth, and bright with jewels ; the graceful almè stood before her like attendant peris ; the Tchorbadji was the one shadow which relieved the bright lights of the picture ; and the children

30 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

who nestled in each other's arms, and gazed in wondering admiration on the strangers with their bright stag-like eyes, seemed to the excited imagination of the adventurer like beings of another world, where care, and crime, and withering had never come !

Dance succeeded to dance, and song to song ; and the Tchorbadji appeared to divide his enthusiasm between Mherpirwir and the disguised Sëidika, whose large deep eyes and exquisite voice had made no slight impression on the fancy of the worthy Janissary.

“ Allah buyûk der ! — My selictar aga* told me, mother, that one of your almè was as beautiful as a houri, and as graceful as a fawn ; and his face is whitened, for he said only the truth ; but he made no mention of the fair awali whose voice is to me as melodious as the Allah hu !† of the followers of the Prophet —By the soul of your father ! you shall shew your young beauties to his highness the Pasha — he will fill their mouths with gold, and spread the carpets of liberality under the feet of merit.—I have said it.”

“ May the words of my lord be written on the soul of his slave with the calam ‡ of grati-

* Sword-bearer.

† Battle cry.

‡ Reed pen.

tude!" said Nevrestè, as she prostrated herself, until her brow touched the floor before the Tchorbadji; " who am I, that my lord should lift my soul into the akash of felicity? What can I do to remove from my head the ashes of unworthiness, and from the skirt of my garment the defilement of reproach?"

" Ne bilirim — what can I say? " replied the Tchorbadji courteously; " Wallah billah! I am satisfied."

" Sëïdika, to whose music my lord has deigned to listen, is no indifferent massaldjhe:" said the old woman; " She has tales which may charm his ear, and wean his thoughts for awhile from the cares of his exalted station, if such be his good pleasure. How says my lord?"

The stately Effendi glanced towards his fair young wife, and reading in her bright eyes an intense anxiety which there was no need of words to interpret, he signalled his acquiescence in the suggestion of Nevrestè; and the almè having grouped themselves on either side of Maniolopolò in attitudes whose grace would have thralled the spirit of a painter, he took from the hands of Mherpirwir, who reclined near him, a richly inlaid zebec, whence he drew tones of sweetness that hushed at once the under-cur-

32 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

rent of whispered delight which came like incense to the ears of the almè ; and then, laying aside the instrument, he turned the full beam of his dark eyes on the Tchorbadji, and in a voice at once subdued and musical, thus told his tale.

CHAPTER III.

THE KINGDOM OF THE MICE.

A wise man will never despise a weak enemy. Fools only scoff at a danger of which they know not the probable extent ; and those in power would do well to recollect that the deepest cavern of the rock is frequently betrayed by a rift scarcely wide enough to admit the hand of a woman.

I am about to tell Your Highness a tale of a mouse ; and I pray you to let your fancy travel with me, that so we may go on our way together in good understanding. And even like the wise man to whom I have just made allusion, my lord must not despise the little animal because of the minuteness of his proportions ; and the rather that he was the Emperor of all the mice in Turkey, whom he ruled in peace, the beloved

of his subjects, with every prospect of a long and prosperous reign.

The subterranean palace was of vast extent; and well and warmly furnished with the spoils of many a midnight visit to the upper earth. The granaries were well stored with corn: peas, beans, and lupins abounded—dried grapes, figs, and other fruits calculated for tardy consumption, were neatly and compactly housed for winter use; and, in short, the padishah of the long-tails nibbled his favourite roots in calm and philosophic dignity; never troubling his head with the feuds which he well knew were continually going on above it.

But who can controul fate? Who can number the stars, count the notes of the bulbul, or postpone the decay of the rose? Great was the consternation throughout the metropolis of Mouse-land, when it was discovered that an old Fox, well known to many of them as a notoriously bad character, a marauder, and a common thief, who swept away enough to supply their whole community for a month, at a single visit to the over-grown granaries of the frightful bipeds who infested the province; and of whom the Mice had never been able to discover the utility, unless indeed when they were reluctantly compelled to

admit, that by housing their corn and roots and other eatables, they saved them (the mice) the trouble of collecting their own supplies — I repeat that great was the consternation when it was discovered that this unprincipled old Fox had thought proper, they could not imagine wherefore, to establish himself in the immediate neighbourhood of their capital ; where he kept up a constant and most unpleasant sensation, by daily and nightly incursions into the surrounding country, and by devouring every unhappy straggler who chanced to cross his path ; a circumstance that filled all the orderly and well conducted citizens with a trepidation, which, if it did not redound to the credit of their courage, at least spoke volumes for their principles.

Nor was this all : for if any fault could be found with the domestic legislation of Mouse-land, it must be admitted that the error lay in the same weakness which has at times operated unpleasantly in other nations. His Majesty the Emperor had a strong predilection in favour of personal beauty. His Prime Minister was the prime dandy of the court, who had won the Imperial smile by the graceful curl of his exquisitely pointed whiskers ; the Secretary of State

was remarkable for the fine fall in his back, when, poised on his hind legs, he presented to the monarch any of the public documents, which important missives were neatly scratched by the thorn of the mimosa plant on the bark of the orange tree —a tablet, which however unwelcome the contents of the scroll might prove to the padishah, at least prevented their ever being offensive — while the Commander-in-Chief was equally celebrated for the beautiful glossiness of his skin, which, luckily for his fortunes, was full three shades lighter than any other in the nation.

But the peculiar vanity of the monarch lay in the length of his subjects' tails; and this fact kept the court, the city, and the whole population of the under-ground Empire in a perpetual state of excitement. Machines were invented for stretching the joints—pulleys were arranged, by which the most ambitious suspended themselves heads downwards, until their eyes became bloodshot, and their respiration impeded — and there was not a mouseling throughout the Empire who did not imitate his natural enemy the kitten, by running round and round in giddy circles with his tail between his teeth !

And now—here was an ill-favoured and burly beast, established under their very noses, whose

tail was so long and bushy, that with one determined sweep it could brush away the whole palace-guard, and lay bare the private apartments of the monarch to the gaze of the entire city—It was enough to breed a rebellion!—and the court favourite, a sleek young mouse of quality, whose tail was the thirty-sixth part of an inch longer than any other near the person of his majesty, and who was, moreover, about to receive the paw of one of the princesses in marriage, actually committed suicide in the first moment of despair, by drowning himself in the skin of a gourd filled with rain water. Being good looking, and in favour at court, he was generally regretted by all those who had anything to hope through his interest—and the kind and considerate sovereign, in order to console his daughter for her unexpected loss, buried the deceased with military honours, to which—as he had always worn very magnificent moustachioes—he was undeniably entitled.

This commotion among the Mice led, however, to one result extremely distressing to the padishah, who had never contemplated any disturbance in his dominions, and whose leisure was now invaded at all moments, while his digestion suffered severely from the continual alarms to

which he was subjected ; he found that a conviction of his incapacity to protect them from their dreaded enemy, was weakening his authority over his subjects.

One of the most abject and fawning of his counsellors, who had never hitherto dared to move eye or limb in the presence of his Imperial Master, until he had received his gracious sanction to do so, had absolutely brushed his whiskers within a foot of the tip of those of his majesty, without proffering the slightest apology ; while several of his bravest generals had begged leave to retire upon their laurels, and to leave the field open to younger men ; whose interests they suddenly discovered to have been greatly injured by their own tenacity of office.

All this was extremely perplexing and vexatious to a monarch who wished for nothing beyond peace and enjoyment, and who had not the slightest taste for difficulty and danger ; and he therefore deemed it expedient to summon a council before these incipient symptoms broadened into downright rebellion ; justly considering, that should he find it expedient to do so, he had as good a right to abdicate the throne, and to provide for his own safety, as his generals had to

run away, and leave the army to provide for itself.

It was a solemn sight to witness the assembling of the gray-bearded ministers of Mouse-land ; each with his tail dragging along the earth, extended to its extremest length, and his round black eyes cast mournfully to the ground. The inhabitants of the city stood aside to let the procession pass ; and they looked upon it with as much interest as though they thought that the idle words of a score of trembling old Mice were likely to dislodge the offending Fox, and to banish him the country ; nor was it until the last joint of the last ministerial tail had slowly disappeared through the portal of the palace, that the crowd dispersed, and the various avocations of the citizens were resumed.

The council-chamber was crowded. The monarch was seated on a pile of nuts, most luxuriously arranged, and covered with the white tufts of the wild cotton tree ; while the councillors took their places in two lines, one on his right hand, and the other on his left, and made a most imposing appearance ; each having assumed his most dignified bearing, as best suited to the emergency of the crisis.

The war of words was long, and at times bit-

ter ; for, with an imminent danger staring them in the face, the ministers were less cautious than usual ; and several, who had never before exchanged aught save courtesies, now bandyed sarcasms, and hints, which enlightened the monarch more profitably than pleasantly on many points on which he had hitherto been most comfortably ignorant. Peculation was brought home to the Keeper of the Privy Purse — the Secretary for Foreign Affairs was taxed with being in correspondence with their enemies the Jerhuahs, or Leaping Mice, a colony of adventurers from Egypt, who had established themselves, no one knew from what impulse, near at hand — the Commander-in-Chief was twitted with a defeat, which, it was insinuated, had filled his store-houses, while it exhausted his army — and the Prime Minister was flatly taxed with having recanted the principles he had professed on accepting office ; and misleading the monarch in a score of instances, not one of which bore the slightest analogy to the subject-matter that they were assembled to discuss.

At length the Fox was mentioned ; and then all individual animosities were merged in the common interest — What was to be done ? The answer was simple—The intruder must be dis-

lodged — ignominiously, with contempt and loathing. This resolution was adopted without a dissentient voice ; but when the next question was propounded, the perplexity became great. *How* was this very desirable measure to be effected ? Not a Mouse among them could point out the method. All the wisdom, or, at least, all the longest tails in the Empire (and hitherto that had answered the same purpose,) collected together in council were unable to decide on the *how?* and, at length, it was hinted by a shrewd and ready-witted Lord Chamberlain, that as there appeared to be some difficulty in removing the Fox, it might be expedient for the Mice themselves to migrate to some distant territory, far from the pollution of his presence ; carrying with them the monarch they revered, the wives they cherished, and the little ones who were growing up about them.

The idea was instantly seized by an oratorical Field-Marshal, who favoured the council with several well-turned periods and flourishes of sentiment ; talked of their household gods, their hearths and homes ; and, finally, concluded by seconding the proposition of his noble friend, and strongly recommending change of air to the whole population.

The monarch leant his head upon his paw, and remained buried in deep and painful thought; when an aged Mouse of reverend aspect who had not yet spoken, arose, and respectfully bowing towards the throne, thus addressed the illustrious Padishah by whom it was occupied.

“ Most noble and most powerful Emperor, in whose smile the earth flourishes — throughout whose realms the sun shines not, he being himself the light in which his subjects live — Lord of the Long Tails, whose joints are strengthened and made supple by the oil of thy countenance—Let the royal gates of attention be unfolded, that the chariots of my argument may enter into thy mind, and linger there. I have suffered all these noble and learned Mice to speak before me — they have flung back the bright page of the volume of their wisdom, and I have read every line, that I might see with their eyes, and comprehend with their understanding. But he who follows the counsels of others when his heart is not in them, is a traitor to his country, and unworthy the confidence of his sovereign ; thus then, having perused the writings of the intelligent, and bowed before the argument of the eloquent, I again lift my head to declare that the precipitate advice of this counsel is contrary

to reason, and likely to lead to incalculable mischief. Great as we are as a people — brave in war — learned in peace — upright in judgment — and governed by a prince whose sceptre sways the destinies of a world, we must not disdain to learn the lesson of wisdom, in whatever tongue it may be taught.

“ Prudence is the step-sister of valour — policy is the good right hand of strength — and wit is the master-spirit of fortune. The spider may be crushed by a touch, yet in its wiliness it weaves a net of subtlety by which it grows into a giant, and feeds upon creatures more powerful than itself. The ant, still weaker of its nature, builds itself in with clay where the fruits are richest, and robs the bird that would devour both — shall *we*, then — We — on whom depend the destinies of Mouseland — Shall *we* desert ourselves in such an hour as this, when by firmness we may regain our threatened security ? Forbid it honour, and courage, and patriotism. If we fly, what ensues ? Our city will be laid waste, our palace prostrated, our possessions become the spoil of our enemies — while we shall be hunted like robbers from place to place — pilgrims without a shrine — wanderers without a home — a nation without a name !

44 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

“ Is it for this that we have toiled and fought ?
eaten the bread of carefulness, and reared aloft
the banner of our ancestors ? No, no — we
must be less than Mice to fall so tamely ! One
effort more must be made, or the bones of our
forefathers will not rest quietly in their disho-
noured graves.”

And then, having secured the ear of attention,
the hoary councillor laid before the assembly the
stratagem by which he hoped to deliver the
groaning people from their common enemy. All
listened anxiously, and one universal squeak of
approbation hailed the communication.

CHAPTER XII.

THE KINGDOM OF THE MICE—*continued.*

BRIGHT rose the moon, and shed her veil of silver over the blushing landscape. The odour of the orange blossom, and the wild thyme, floated like a cloud of incense on the air. The song of the bird of love wove a spell about it, beneath which the soul dissolved away in sadness; and the leaves whispered to the winds a tale to which no mortal words might give utterance; when the great Emperor of Mice mustered his forces on the upper earth; and witnessed with a noble enthusiasm, worthy of his exalted station, the gathering of his armed hordes.

Like a lake gently agitated by the breeze, he led them over an extensive plain, and with prompt

46 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

valour, and an energy incident to the great emergency in which he was involved, headed the host until it halted near a well-stored granary, already familiar to many of the number. The place was undefended, and he at once abandoned it to pillage; while every individual mouse, zealous in so good a cause, carried off his own portion of the spoil, with which he made the best of his way home; and there, having abandoned it to the care of the aged and the young, who were unable to encounter the fatigue and danger of a predatory excursion, by whom it was housed, and secured from the attacks of noxious reptiles; returned for a fresh booty, until little remained in the building which had lately groaned beneath the weight of grain.

When things had progressed thus far, the hoary sage who had devised the stratagem, commanded the obedient army to collect the remainder of the spoil, and strew it plentifully along the path which led to the dwelling of the Fox; taking care that not one scattered grain should betray the road to their own city; and having seen his order scrupulously fulfilled, he joined the monarch, and they at once returned in silence to the capital.

The horror of the husbandmen, when on the

morrow they discovered that the fruits of their industry had disappeared during the night, it would require the eloquence of a moullah to describe; and with bitter vows of vengeance they soon traced the track that had been taken by the supposed thief, for the scattered grain lay thick upon the ground to the very burrow of the Fox. Wonder succeeded to annoyance, and they communed among themselves what dishonest inhabitant had there established himself; a fact which they resolved to ascertain, while they also satisfied their vengeance. A strong snare was accordingly prepared; and that very evening the poor innocent Fox, who was returning supperless to bed, after a very unsuccessful foray, was caught in the trap that had been laid for him.

Many an honest man unwittingly thrusts his neck into the noose meant for a rascal, but what is written, is written; and it is useless to contend with fate.

In less than an hour, the Emperor of Mouse-land learnt the defeat of his enemy; when a general rejoicing was proclaimed throughout the city, as for a victory. And in this the wise monarch discovered to his loving people the profundity of his intelligence; for it is so rare that

48 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

a sovereign owes success to the wit of his counsellors, that he does well to make the occasion serve as a national jubilee.

As he ruminated on the glorious news, he swelled with pride and importance, until he felt as though the palace could not hold him, and that he must breathe the upper air, or burst with his own greatness ; and accordingly, ordering his travelling throne, he caused himself to be carried in state on a dried maple leaf, at the head of a formidable army, to triumph over his prostrate enemy.

“ Khosh buldāk — well found, most mighty Fox ;” broke forth the exulting Padishah ; “ How do you propose to cook those of my subjects on whom you sup to-night ? ”

The captive felt the delicate irony, but he was too wily to bandy sentences with a crowned head ; and with admirable judgment he felt that this was not exactly the moment to retort : he therefore bent humbly before the monarch, and with a penitential demeanour thus addressed him :—

“ Most mighty Conqueror ! whose armies are countless as the locusts, and formidable as the panther of the desert ; whose voice is as the thunders of the tempest, and whose eye mocks

the lightning by which it is accompanied. I bow before your resentment, and own that it is just. I mocked at your power, because in your mercy you had spared me its exercise ; but now, when by my enormities I have provoked my punishment, I am compelled to admit it, because I am prostrated beneath its immensity. I deserve no forbearance, but I ask it as a boon ; and if a life of devotion to your interests can atone for a brief season of folly, I put my head into your hand, and devote myself henceforward to your service. Try me, dread sovereign ! and I will soon convince your Imperial reason that my future exertions for your welfare shall more than compensate for my past enormities."

The Padishah, struck by the humble bearing of his lately formidable enemy, and quite alive to the additional consequence which must accrue to him from the possession of so powerful and crafty a subject, hastily called his counsellors aside, and desired them to give their utmost attention to the question that he was about to lay before them ; viz. whether the good faith of the Fox should be trusted, and his services secured to the Empire by the strong chain of gratitude ; or whether, placing no faith in his protestations of amendment, they should laugh his

promises to scorn, and abandon him to the inevitable destruction which awaited him at the hands of his captors.

Many opinions were given ; for there is nothing of which either men or mice are so lavish as of their advice. It is indeed often given, not only unasked but uncared for ; and in this instance, the only sound opinion advanced was by the same old mouse who had been the cause of the capture ; for the young vain mouselings of the Imperial household were delighted at the prospect of having so large and strong a companion ; and they already began twisting their whiskers with additional importance at the bare idea. But the hoary sage was not to be misled by such childish chimeras ; and he soberly represented in the humblest but most earnest manner to the Padishah that a natural enemy could never be converted into a sincere and trustworthy friend ; for that however he might be compelled from distress, necessity, or ambition, to hide his real lineaments under the mask of good fellowship, the antipathies of his nature could never be entirely conquered or eradicated. As well might the tiger be tamed while he possessed his claws — in short, he strongly advised that the snared Fox should immediately be put

to death ; and the Empire thus delivered altogether from any relapse of its late danger.

The young and impetuous voted this reasoning a bore, and the reasoner unseasonably prosy ; while the elders insisted with some plausibility that it was politic in a weak state to form powerful alliances ; and that an admirable opportunity now presented itself of securing an ally, who, having felt the consequences of their indignation, would not again be tempted to brave it.

It would be well, nevertheless, if all diplomats who are inclined to start a similar theory, were to reflect, that bringing a dangerous enemy into the camp, to learn at once the secret of its weakness, and the fact that his overthrow was the more fortunate issue of an adventurous stratagem, is a very probable method of making their own necks the stepping-stones to his advancement and revenge.

The vain monarch, however, at once resolved to act upon the latter argument ; the Fox was accordingly sworn to allegiance with all due ceremony, and in proper form ; and he was then freed from the snare by the teeth of his new allies ; the Padishah finally returning to the city in triumph, followed by the Fox as far as the

entrance of the capital, where the Imperial suite was deprived of his presence by the unpleasant fact that either he was too large for the gates, or the gates were too small for him. To reconcile him to this compulsory exclusion, the monarch, therefore, in the exuberance of his exulting vanity, created him Vèzir, with the Imperial permission to reside beyond the walls.

It is dangerous policy to put authority into the hands of one with whose power you have not strength to contend : but as empty bladders float on the surface of the stream, and gather only the scum of the waters, while solid substances seek the bottom of the channel, and form receptacles for the gold-dust ; so vain and thoughtless men, puffed up by their own imaginary consequence, disregard the sage counsels of the wary and the wise, to pollute themselves with the frothy vapourings of the shallow and the selfish. And if such be the case with men, little marvel is it that the same weakness should exist among mice.

The Fox, fond of power, and finding at the moment no more legitimate field for his ambition, resolved to infuse into the mind of the Emperor of the Mice some of his own wild schemes of aggrandisement ; and he accordingly began by

assuring his majesty at the next divan, that, with his Imperial permission, he would soon make him master of the whole province.

The Padishah was enchanted. Every sovereign loves power, and conquest, and authority; and it is extraordinary how greedily they imbibe the prospect of securing them. The Vèzir explained his theories, and they carried conviction with them; so the new Prime Minister snapped up the old counsellor on the first favourable opportunity; delivered a funeral oration over his mangled remains, remarkable for its eloquence and its no-meaning; and then assumed the reins of government without opposition, and commenced his political career.

CHAPTER IV.

THE KINGDOM OF THE MICE—*continued.*

THERE was a kingdom close beside that of Mouseland, which was peculiarly obnoxious to the Fox ; for its inhabitants, although comely and specious when all went well for their interests, were especially irritable and pugnacious in the event of any opposition : and as they could not be prevailed upon to enter into the views of the new Vèzir, he naturally felt the necessity of laying the axe to the root of their existence.

Brave as they were, the Mice had some difficulty in contending with the Cats, who held their nocturnal assemblies under the roof of a dilapidated dwelling not a hundred rods distant from the Imperial palace of the Padishah ; and accompanied their counsels with an outcry and uproar

very annoying and unsatisfactory to the Empire of the Long-tails.

The dissonance was dreadful; and the favorite wife of the Emperor, a pied mouse of extraordinary beauty, and celebrated (unhappily enough on this occasion) for the length of her ears, was actually thrown into convulsions on the breaking-up of one of their orgies; a circumstance which deprived the Padishah of an heir, and the people of a Crown-Prince — a great acquisition when there is no prospect of either a siege or a famine.

The army, also, suffered greatly from their vicinity, as they threw out detachments from their main body, who laid in ambush for the foraging parties of the Fox; and not only destroyed many of his most efficient troops, but moreover threatened to occasion a famine in his camp.

It is remarkably unpleasant for a general to have his men picked off by twos and threes, and made away with he knows not how; for the Cats were adepts at the business, and never left a trace of their victims, nor a sufficient fragment of their remains, to admit of any pretext on the part of a grateful nation to erect a monument over their ashes.

Things were in this uncomfortable state, when

one morning as the Vèzir of Mouseland was out reconnoitring, he reached the banks of a river, where a fishing-party of Storks were busily employed in the capture of their finny prey. The usual compliments passed between them ; and the Fox with infinite tact eulogized their skill, envied them their capabilities for so exciting an amusement, and finally accepted a fish which was cordially offered to him by one of the party ; after which he digressed to the beauty of the weather, the loveliness of the landscape, and the invigorating freshness of the morning air ; and when he made his parting bow, he left the whole long-necked society deeply impressed by his good breeding and judgment.

This point gained, he trotted leisurely along until he reached the head-quarters of the Cats, when he sat down before the door, as if from weariness, with the fish between his feet. The aromatic odour of his precious charge soon began to affect the olfactory organs of the feline community, who flocked from every part of the building with desire in their eyes, and water in their mouths ; and gradually advancing nearer and nearer to the Fox, they began to be very inquisitive about the fish.

Reynard, having a point to carry, of course af-

fected the most supreme indifference, and turned the fish over and over with his paw in a manner at once careless and graceful, exhibiting it in all its beauty to the longing cats. This was natural enough, for it is what is done every day in the world ; the possession of an object is little, unless that possession is coveted by others ; and its decided enjoyment consists in the envy which it excites.

As they continued to urge him, even beyond the limits of politeness, the Fox at length condescended to inform the expectant Cats that their curiosity was as unavailing as it was oppressive ; for that fish could only be obtained by ready wit, and good policy, by stratagem, and craft ; qualities in which their people were peculiarly deficient ; and that even were he to tell them where they abounded, they would never have the address to catch them.

This announcement occasioned universal indignation among the Cats. To be told that you are a rogue is not agreeable, yet the accusation is borne with philosophy by many a haughty spirit —but to be told that you have not wit enough to be a rogue, is enough to try the temper of any animal ; and accordingly the whole feline population was in a tumult.

Order being at length restored by the energetic exertions of a respectable old tabby, whose talent for ratting had given him great influence over the minds of the mob, he lost no time in explaining to them that resenting a few light words, evidently uttered in mere playfulness by the Fox, was not at all the way to come at the fish; a cogent species of reasoning which penetrated at once to the stomachs of the assembly; and when he found that he had secured the public ear, he gently hinted that those fire-eating mousers who did not feel their honour satisfied by this policy, might take an early opportunity after the fish were secured, of resenting the insult which had been offered to them as a nation; a suggestion that proved the profound diplomacy of the old ratter, and shewed that he knew more of the world and its wisdom than the Fox felt inclined to give him credit for.

Under the influence of this sound advice, the Cats drew in their claws, lowered their backs, which had each been arched like the moon when her course is but half run; and began to tread on velvet, and to purr as melodiously as though the fish which they hoped to obtain were already in their possession. One or two indeed turned away their heads, and spat upon the ground in

disgust ; but they passed unheeded in the crowd ; and quite satisfied with having thus magnificently testified their disapprobation, remained on the spot to ascertain whether they were likely to benefit by the piscatorial enquiry then pending.

At the urgent entreaty of the ancient tabby, the Fox, thinking he had carried matters far enough, at length consented to point out to the Cats the place where the fish were to be procured ; although he still assured them that the gratification of their curiosity was the only advantage likely to accrue to them from the information. Placing himself therefore in an easy attitude, and occasionally whisking away a pertinaceous fly, which persisted in buzzing about his nose, with his handsome tail, he thus addressed them :—

“ People of Catland ! However useless the secret may prove to you which you are anxious to possess, I will humour your weakness, because it is common to all nations to seek information which can never avail them, or rather, of which they seldom learn how to avail themselves. Know then that one day, when I was suffering from a languor which I trusted might be dispelled by the fresh air, I wandered along the river bank, where I encountered a number of Storks feasting

upon a profusion of the daintiest fish ; and being thoroughly satiated with Mice, I enquired of one of them where this desirable luxury could be procured.

“ For a time he resisted my importunity, but at length he informed me that on the other side of the river there was an exhausted lake, in which thousands of fish were expiring ; and that, for his own part, he had become not only difficult and fastidious in his selection, but absolutely quite tired of them. Such being the case, I entered into an arrangement with the Stork to exchange mice for fish, which enables us to vary our repasts, and proves perfectly satisfactory to both of us.”

The Cats were overjoyed at this intelligence, and thanked the Fox warmly for his generosity, at which he laughed in his sleeve, as is customary on such occasions : and then, presenting the fish which had led to the discussion, to a graceful little green-eyed vivacious-looking kitten, nearly related to the royal family, he took his leave, followed by one universal purring of admiration.

A council of Cats was speedily assembled ; the available troops reviewed and harangued by a fierce old black general, who had lost one eye, two

inches of tail, and half an ear in some previous engagement; and a resolution was formed to attack the camp of the mice that very night. The army were in high spirits: the citizens volunteered by scores: and the head-quarters were all commotion. There is nothing which more excites the valour of an attacking force than the known weakness of the enemy.

Lapped in delicious and most savoury dreams lay the august Emperor of the Mice. His visions had carried him into the palace of the Pasha, and buried him in the midst of a pillauf of chicken; where he was enjoying himself discreetly, when one sharp shrill squeek of anguish rang through the city streets, and penetrated even to the Imperial apartment. Up sprang the Padisha; the pillauf vanished; and in its place he saw scores of ill-omened Cats pouncing upon his defenceless subjects, and bearing them off in their insatiate jaws.

His majesty stood for one instant aghast—but only one—Like all great personages, he possessed the most beautiful decision of character; and accordingly, when he had drawn a long breath, and taken in at the same time a perfect view of the proceedings, he prudently turned tail, and held himself under the roots of a tree

near at hand. In this he acted, as he ever did, on principle; for, as he justly argued, while he lay snugly ensconced in his hole, and the work of carnage went on above his head, the life of the sovereign was every thing to the subject; his generals were paid for fighting, just as he was paid for reigning; and he could not, therefore, without indelicacy, interfere with their privileges.

The Fox, meanwhile, had not been idle; he had an extraordinary talent for diplomacy, like most of his race; and he had so thoroughly ingratiated himself with the Storks, who, though long-necked, were by no means long-headed, that they readily entered into his views. He obtained a private audience of the chief of the tribe, in which he very ably set forth his own disinterestedness—for he had not considered it necessary to inform his new allies that he held an official appointment under the Emperor of Mouseland, for whose person and people he was well aware that the Storks entertained as much contempt as they did for the nation of the frogs; devouring them, whenever they fell in their way, in precisely the same unceremonious manner—while he earnestly and emphatically represented that the Storks were a mighty and a numerous

tribe, requiring much sustenance ; and, like the Arabs of the bipeds, accustomed to secure it by their talents for the chase ; while the Cats were an insidious, beggarly, poaching community, exhausting by their treacherous and wily arts, the prey which was the legitimate right of their more generous enemies.

The inference was clear ; in the extirpation of the Cats, the Storks were ridding themselves of an obnoxious race ; while the Fox could derive no advantage whatever from their destruction, save the calm and placid conviction of having done his duty, and benefitted a most important portion of the creation.

There is nothing either so rare or so beautiful as self-sacrifice in a good cause. It is the germ whence spring all patriots !

When the generous Fox had departed, the Aga of the Storks marshalled his forces, and laid before them the stratagem of their friendly counsellor, which met with unanimous approval, and was immediately resolved upon ; nor was its exercise long delayed, for morning had scarcely dawned when the Cats were seen entering their territory ; and as the vanguard of the two parties met, the old tabby of whom mention has been already made, advanced in front of his fel-

lows, and was immediately confronted by the chief of the Storks in person.

When the necessary ceremonies had terminated, the Cats announced their pacific intentions, explained the treaty into which they desired to enter, and proposed the preliminaries for the deliberation of the other party.

The Storks listened with a gravity worthy of the occasion — the exports and imports were curiously discussed ; and many propositions advanced likely to accelerate the contemplated exchange ; when an old Stork, renowned for shrewdness, and that minute talent for calculation which is so essential to the financial interests of a community, stood up ; and poizing himself steadily on one leg, with an aplomb strikingly demonstrative of the complete and nice equilibrium of his arguments, remarked, that with all due consideration and respect for the talent exhibited by their visitors, he considered that in all tribes and nations supporting themselves by their own exertions, time was property, and consequently not to be lightly or inconsiderately squandered ; and that, however convenient it might be for one party to await the result of the other's foray, it would save a great deal of time, and be infinitely more advisable,

that in the event of the completion of the treaty, the Cats should be ferried across the river at once, where they might revel on fish, binding themselves on their return to supply the camp of the Storks with mice enough for their immediate consumption.

The Cats, delighted at the suggestion, concluded the treaty at once; and laying the Mice which they had brought with them before the Aga, had the satisfaction of seeing them swallowed by the Storks; after which ceremony each committed himself to the care of one of their new allies, who instantly spread their wings, and left the sordid earth and all its creeping things far beneath them.

The Cats, unaccustomed to this mode of travelling, were variously affected; the timid shut their eyes, and twisted their tails round the necks of their obliging friends; the more ambitious swelled with delight, and almost taught themselves to believe that they were flying on their own wings; the bilious grew sick and dizzy; and the more delicate absolutely fainted.

But all delusions ceased as the Storks hovered for an instant just above the centre of the rapid stream; and then with a loud shriek of triumphant hatred, loosened their hold, and

hurled their victims to a watery grave. Black, white, or tabby, not a cat escaped ; and thus the Fox, at the expense of a score or two of Mice, freed the Empire for ever from their dangerous vicinage, and provided for the general safety ; and he retired to his burrow that night with the happy consciousness of superior desert, which must ever brighten the dreams of a minister, who, while he is receiving the grateful acknowledgements of his sovereign, and the plauditory acclamations of a whole people, is deeply impressed by the delicious conviction that, like the cuckoo which lays its egg in the nest of another bird, he is quietly providing for his own interests.

CHAPTER V.

THE KINGDOM OF THE MICE — *continued.*

Ambition, unlike jealousy, will not submit to be dieted on trifles; and, accordingly, the little triumphs of the Fox merely stimulated his taste for power; and led him to wilder and bolder schemes which were bounded only by universal monarchy.

We are told that ambition peopled Eblis, and that it is the favourite vice of Sheitan; it will, therefore, be readily believed that an occasion was soon afforded to the Fox for the indulgence of his peculiar passion.

A caravan passing through the province, arrived within a few stadia of the metropolis of Mouseland, and created intense alarm among the foraging parties, who came scampering home-

ward from all quarters, with a paucity of provisions exceedingly unsatisfactory to the sedentary portion of the community ; and with tremendous accounts of the monsters who composed it, that plunged the whole city into convulsions of terror ; only allayed by the recollection of the quantity of good things likely to be scattered by the reckless travellers, should they chance to halt sufficiently near to the territories of his Imperial majesty, to enable his subjects to secure a part of the spoil.

Their hopes were fulfilled, and their fears amply compensated ; for, in their immediate vicinity, close on the borders of a thick wood, a poor Camel fell under his load, and it was found impossible to raise him from the earth ; his burthen was accordingly divided among the rest of the string ;* and as the travellers possessed no means of transporting the exhausted animal, he was necessarily left to his fate.

Rest, and the means of indulging his hunger, soon restored the sick Camel to health ; and when the foraging parties once more ventured forth from their subterranean city, to profit by the halt of the caravan, the Fox espied the Camel at a dis-

* Camels travel in strings in the East, and the train is usually led by a donkey.

tance, calmly browsing on the young shoots of a stately tulip-tree. His resolution was instantly formed, and, without the delay of a moment he turned tail, and pausing at the gate of the capital, demanded an immediate audience of the Emperor. His hurried manner and imperious tone greatly agitated the city-guard, a party of whom scampered to the palace ; and in a few moments the Imperial procession was seen issuing forth with as much haste as decorum would permit.

Having made his obeisance, the Fox entered at once on the subject of his anxiety, and acquainted the august Majesty of Mouseland with the fact, that, an insolent Camel, a mere beast of burthen, a vile slave, bred to toil and obedience — in short, it were endless to repeat the opprobrious epithets lavished upon the intruder — was ravaging the forest at pleasure, polluting the fountain at which the Imperial thirst was often quenched, and devouring the fruits destined for the Imperial treasury.

The monarch trembled for his throne, for he had once seen a Camel, and he had never forgotten his terror on that occasion ; he was, therefore, unprepared with any suitable comment on the alarming intelligence ; and the surprise of

the monarch may be imagined, when finding him dumb, the Grand Vèzir thus continued :—

“ This must not be, most puissant Padishah — Shall an empire like that of Mouseland — a free people, under a free sovereign, whose linked tails would encompass El Caf, and whose tribes fill the whole earth, bow before an insolent caitiff whose only virtue is obedience ? Shall a nation, accustomed to live on the labour of others, yield to a poor spiritless wretch, whose very existence is toil ? Forbid it the Majesty of Mouse-land ! Lord of the Long-Tails, I prostrate myself before you ; I pray you to be just to yourself ; and not to suffer the shadow of your greatness to diminish. Were not the Cats a mighty and a warlike people, and have we not destroyed them ? Are not the Storks the natural enemies of your subjects, and have we not sharpened our wits upon their dulness ; and made them serve us by throwing a veil over their heads ? The Camel must be subjected to the same illustrious sway — he must bow before the carpet of your Imperial majesty, and acknowledge your supremacy : or he must die the death of a traitor, and perish miserably for his presumption.”

A general squeak of enthusiastic approbation burst from the assembled courtiers ; and it was

with some difficulty that the Fox could make himself heard, as he approached the climax of his speech. A flourish of the monarch's tail, however, at length commanded attention, and the Vèzir hastened to add, that he should strongly counsel his Majesty to enforce immediate obedience from the baseborn intruder ; as should vigorous measures be long delayed, they might prove altogether abortive ; a circumstance which would tend to throw a doubt on the power and greatness of his Majesty, and diminish the lustre of his reign. The beard of rebellion should be plucked out by the roots, before it grew into strength and dignity ; and he, therefore, called upon the Light of the Empire, and the Glory of the Earth, to subdue at once the insolence of the Camel, and compel him to his allegiance.

The Padishah swelled with conscious greatness as he listened to the oration of his minister ; and, with a look of supreme command, he ordered the immediate attendance of the Camel ; when it became a question, how, in the event of the summons being disregarded, obedience could be enforced. Gradually, as the difficulties of the case presented themselves, the dignity of the monarch dwindled away ; and, at length, he was

fairly compelled to confess — though he did it with a reluctant majesty of manner, much commented on by the court — that he really did not see how such an event could be brought to pass.

The Fox, with a confident and pleasant air, immediately volunteered to undertake the embassy, and pledged his veracity on its success; and the whole population of Mouseland, proud of such an ambassador, embraced the offer with avidity. It is always agreeable to find a back willing to bear our burthens, and broad enough to support them; and thus the Mice were delighted to leave a mission, of which they were to reap the benefit, in the hands of their crafty ally.

The Fox, thus duly authorised and empowered to be impertinent, journeyed on with the self-complacency usual to plenipotentiaries under such favourable circumstances; and having reached the spot where the Camel, wearied with wandering through the forest, and satiated with leaves and fruits, was gravely chewing the cud under the shadowing branches of an odoriferous cedar; he accosted him in haughty language, at once declared his mission, and so magnified the power and prowess of his master, that the Camel, who like many other animals in the crea-

tion who carry their heads high, was low enough in heart; rose humbly from the earth, and assuring the Ambassador that he had transgressed ignorantly, besought of him as an especial favour to intercede for him to the Emperor; and was at once given to understand that he must forthwith wait upon the Padishah in person, as no minor submission would be received.

The Camel, trembling with anxiety and terror, declared his readiness to compensate by any means in his power, for his involuntary trespass on the territories of so high and powerful a prince; and he at once volunteered to accompany the Fox to court; when, having desired his timid companion to halt on the edge of the wood, about a furlong from the city gates, until the Emperor should consent to give him an audience, the Vèzir of Mouseland hastened to report his success to his Imperial master, and to conduct him to the presence of this new ally.

Greatness is merely comparative; and it is measured by so many different standards, that it is often very difficult to determine on its actual limits. Thus, as the Camel stood buried in thought, with his head drooping, and his heart quailing, he scarcely heeded the crowd of busy Mice who were darting about immediately at his

feet ; nor had he an idea that among them were some of the high officers of the household, and personages of distinction about the court of the very nation to which he had come there to swear allegiance. Had he been asked his opinion of the locality, little dreaming that he was in the close vicinity of a great city, he would have simply answered that the spot was cool, quiet, and shady, but terribly infested with vermin !

Such is life. The greatness of one is the scorn of another — the pride which fills one bosom is fed by what appears disgrace to its neighbour ; and thus the world rolls on, peopled with delusion, and deception, and self-value.

At length the Camel was roused from his reverie by a disagreeable chorus of squeaking, and a great commotion among the Mice ; whose numbers continued to increase so rapidly, and to approach him so nearly, that he was just about to crush a score of the boldest under his heavy foot, when the reappearance of the Fox diverted his attention, and saved the lives of a few individuals of rank and fashion who would otherwise have been victimised.

Under these circumstances the rage of the indignant Camel may be readily imagined, when on

demanding of the Ambassador whether he should succeed in obtaining an audience of the offended monarch, he was informed that he was already in the presence; and that a somewhat spare, lean-looking mouse with gray whiskers, seated upon a morsel of red rag, was the mighty sovereign, whose nod was to decide his fate.

For a moment the Camel bent down his long neck, and gazed steadily and deridingly on the wretched little animal, who sat swelling with pride, surrounded by his court; and then, flinging up his heels, he gave one tremendous kick which sent a dozen courtiers flying into the air, and deliberately trotted back to the forest.

Pride, unsustained by circumstance and power is as untenable as the wind ; and they who endeavour to cover their insignificance by big words, labour as idly as boys who throw stones at the sun, or dogs who bay the moon when it is at full.

Abashed by the indignity which he had just sustained under the very walls of his capital, and in the presence of the pillars of the state, the Padishah sat for awhile with his head buried in his tail, as though he had yielded up the spirit; but at length his great soul asserted itself even

in this painful emergency ; and calling the fox aside, he thus reproachfully addressed him.

“ Vèzir ! whom I have long regarded less as my slave than as the brother of my adoption ; upon whose neck I have flung the reins of power, and in whose hands I have placed the beard of wisdom ; what disgraceful ashes have not your blind councils heaped upon my dishonoured head ? The graves of my ancestors are defiled ; and the faces of my people are blackened. The wise men have said that kings are as compasses in the midst of the nations, to sweep the great circle of wisdom ; but you have made me the pole of folly, and the index of disgrace. Till measures are well pondered in the mind, madmen alone venture to risk their exercise ; but double is his delusion who crushes others in his own defeat. When the sun rose to-day above the earth which was created for my pleasure, my spear was as a ray of the morning, my sword a bright beam flashing death and terror, and my helmet a star of light ; princes caught the fire of glory from my glance ; and my smile made heroes—and now, I am a dishonoured sovereign, abashed by the gaze of my own subjects.”

“ Great sanctuary of the world !” replied the Fox, bowing meekly before the irritated monarch ;

“ Refuge of the distressed ! whose fame is echoed from hill to hill, and with whose praise the valleys of the earth are vocal ; I, the humblest slave of the Majesty of Mouseland, beseech your highness to be no longer possessed by grief, but to raise your eyes to glory, and to regild the crown of courage. I hold to the nostrils of power the pleasing perfume of success ; and while I wear away my forehead on the humble sands of prostration, I promise on the faith of my allegiance, that ere long, the insolent slave who has dared to brave your anger shall be trodden down in his pride.”

Somewhat appeased by these assurances, the monarch once more consented to be guided by his wily minister ; and then, abruptly dismissing his court, he returned *incog* to the city, much to the disappointment of the sight-loving inhabitants, who had promised themselves a pageant, of which the untoward event that had occurred beyond the walls had altogether deprived them ; for no monarch can be disposed to shew himself to his people, just as he has been kicked.

CHAPTER VI.

THE KINGDOM OF THE MICE—*continued.*

THE Fox, at one moment swearing vengeance on the insolent Camel who had dared to thwart him in his wishes ; and at the next, laughing until he was obliged to wipe the tears from his eyes with his paw, as he remembered the ridiculous overthrow of dandy Lords of the Bed-chamber, and conceited Officers of State ; travelled on until he reached a sugar plantation with which he was well acquainted ; moralizing as he went in a strain more curious than edifying ; and not at all calculated to have raised him in the esteem of the pigmy Emperor of Mouse-land if it had unfortunately come to his knowledge.

Having entered the plantation, he selected one

of the finest and most luscious sugar-canies he could find ; and then sauntered to a grove in the neighbourhood, the favourite haunt of an aged Monkey, gray in the arts of mischief.

Affecting not to observe the hoary tenant of the wood, the Fox seated himself under a tree, and began fanning himself with his tail, as though overcome with heat and fatigue ; while he leered out at the ends of his eyes from time to time, and was overjoyed to perceive the Monkey intent upon the sugar cane, licking his wishful jaws, and leaping from branch to branch in all the restlessness of desire. At length the water began to flow from his parted lips ; and then the Fox, believing that the proper moment was come, affected suddenly to perceive him, and with extreme courtesy greeted him, and begged to make his acquaintance.

The Monkey grinned and chattered, and maintained a respectful distance ; having an unpleasant consciousness that Foxes sometimes devoured Monkies, and deeming it most prudent to keep out of the reach of a paw ; though he returned the compliment of his new acquaintance with considerable urbanity, influenced in no slight degree by the sight of the sugar-cane.

The prospect of advantage always smooths

the temper : it is the oil of selfishness flung on the waters of passion.

Gradually, therefore, but without lessening the distance between them, the two ill-assorted companions fell into conversation, until the Fox had confided just as much of his intentions to the Monkey as he judged expedient ; and had hinted to him, that if he would pledge himself to assist his designs, he would not only bestow upon him the tempting luxury which he appeared so much to covet, but would direct him where to find a thousand such.

The Monkey first listened and doubted ; then looked and believed : and, finally, requesting the Fox to retire a little apart, promised his co-operation as soon as he should have devoured the sugar-cane. The crafty designer smiled and complied ; and when the Monkey had completed his delicious repast, he led the way to the forest, where the unsuspecting Camel was browsing on the branches of the tall trees.

Never take an ally into the field fasting. Hunger sours the temper, and quenches the enthusiasm. A man never loves his neighbour so well as when he has just plunged his fingers into his pillauf.

Having pointed out the Camel to his new

friend, the Fox sauntered away, and left the whole affair in the hands of the Monkey ; who immediately scrambled into the tree on which the intended victim was feeding, and seizing the broken halter that had been left in his nose, fastened his head to the branches.

It is dangerous to leave even a trace of your former insignificance when you are bent on affecting greatness. Many a proud man is lost by the broken halter of some low habit, which puts his beard into the hand of his enemy, and defiles it with the unsavoury oil of ridicule.

The Fox, who had kept a watchful eye on his new friend, speedily perceived his success, and hastened to congratulate him on his dexterity and address ; and then, when he found that the vanity of the Monkey was touched, he made him ample promises of reward, if he would oblige him by his valuable co-operation in another undertaking which he had much at heart.

The hoary pug, who had been linked to the will of the Fox by the chain of sweet words, directly consented ; and, leaving the unfortunate Camel tied to the tree, the two confederates journeyed through the forest until they came to a piece of timber which some woodsman had been employed in sawing asunder.

Here the Fox paused, and pointing to a wedge which had been inserted in the wood, informed the Monkey, who had not yet ventured to approach him too nearly, that he had particular occasion for the wedge, but that he had striven in vain to possess himself of it, and now relied solely upon the sagacity of the same master-spirit that had captured the Camel.

Pug smiled, almost in scorn, at the helplessness of his companion ; and forthwith began to work away with his teeth and paws with an energy which greatly diverted the Fox, who was laughing heartily in his own quiet peculiar way, when suddenly a mightier effort than usual dislodged the wedge, and the tail of the Monkey was caught, and held fast by the closing timber.

“ Ajaib — wonderful ! ” shouted Reynard giving loose to a peal of merriment that echoed through the forest ; “ Had your beard grown gray in ignorance that you had yet to learn, oh ! Monkey ! that they who toil to gratify their sensual appetites, and labour under the impetus of idle vanity, are fitting tools for craftier spirits, and ever fall into a trap of their own setting ? You have breakfasted heartily at my expense ; and I do not deny that you have earned the meal ; but it is ever ill-policy to consume the

wages before the work is done. I owed you the courtesy of telling you these truths, that you might not die as unprofitably as you have lived; but I will not weary you with words."

And, so saying, he fell upon the ill-fated Monkey, and devoured him without mercy.

They who, to prosper themselves, consent to further the evil designs of the unworthy, fail not to reap the reward of their mean self-love.

In an audience of the Padishah, which he obtained immediately on reaching the city, the Fox at once explained the situation of the Camel, at which the Monarch and all the court laughed themselves almost into convulsions ; and many witticisms were ventured, that extremely delighted the younger members of the court ; while the Vèzir, in a fine imaginative strain of eloquence, was explaining the stratagem by which he had secured the helpless Camel ; wherein it was remarkable that the Monkey was never once mentioned.

The ingratitude of the great was written in letters of crimson upon the first scroll of knowledge. It is easier to number the stars, than to be remembered by the mighty whom you have served. A favour conferred upon the haughty

is as a chain about their necks, of which they often break the links with a scymitar.

A general rejoicing was ordered throughout the metropolis of Mouseland ; for former defeat always doubles the triumph of subsequent success ; compliments were lavished on the Vèzir, which he received with characteristic modesty. He was designated the Saviour of the Empire, and he placed his paw upon his heart, and swore that he had done nothing, absolutely nothing. He was declared with acclamation to be the great hero of the age, the master-spirit of victory, the Conqueror of the Cats ; and he only smiled a grateful smile, and assured the excited populace that he had but done his duty.

They who feel their power can afford to ape humility—it is throwing gold dust into the eyes which should not be too clear-sighted : and the great do well at once to dazzle and to blind ; for it is a compound policy beyond the reach of the vulgar.

While the citizens of Mouseland were enjoying themselves in preparations for the rejoicing, the Padishah, anxious to secure his share of the general gratification, and unable, from his exalted station, to join in the amusements of his subjects, determined on proceeding to the forest

in order to gratify his revenge by exulting over the arrogant captive ; and accordingly, commanding his retinue to be prepared, he hastened to the field of triumph, and climbing the tree to which the Camel was attached, he seated himself upon a branch directly above his head, and poured forth upon him the whole volume of his angry satire.

“ Welcome, thrice welcome, you of the straight back !” he said scoffingly ; “ Happy are you, who can feed upon the young leaves of the forest, and drink water from the clouds ; who can wander hither and thither over the earth —and yet, what say I ? It would seem that you are less free than your stature would imply ; for, had not your neck been longer than your head, you would never presumptuously have dared to kick up the dust of contempt in the eyes of an assembled court, and a free people, until you had learned how far it might be safe to brave their resentment. How like you now the lesson ? Does it not depend upon my sovereign will whether you become once more a wanderer over the green plains, and a quaffer of the bright rivers, or remain here to die the death which your vain-glorious self-appreciation has drawn down upon you ? Truly it does so ; that your blanched

bones as they glimmer in the moonlight may remind all future upstarts of the danger of overlooking through their own vanity the probable power of others ; and of attempting to despise and to subdue animals eminently their superiors."

As he felt that he had here uttered a most impressive sentiment, the Padishah paused for applause ; and the assembled Mice, seeing at once the singular appositeness with which such a remark fell from his Imperial lips, were not niggardly in their demonstrations of approbation.

There are few things so admirable upon earth as consistency ; and as the Fox listened, the tears of suppressed merriment trembled in his eyes.

Meanwhile the Camel, conscious that despite the insignificance of his enemy, he was nevertheless completely at his mercy, felt the necessity of conforming to any proposal, and of submitting to any indignity in order to save his life ; and, accordingly, making no comment on the absurdity of the monarch's address, he laid his heart on the ashes of humility, and thus replied :—

“ Mirror of mightiness, and Sun of strength !
My crime against your greatness has grown out

of my ignorance of its extent. I came from a far land, a helpless stranger, unknowing and unknown. No dream of your power had fallen upon my soul, nor had the light of your presence beamed upon my eyes — I sinned, because I deceived myself, and judged of your strength by your size. I am already sufficiently punished by the knowledge that I have incurred your displeasure. Pardon me, therefore, dread sovereign, lest I expire of grief; and suffer me, by a life of devotion to your Imperial will, to expiate my transgression. Put the rings of obedience into my ears, and let me swear eternal allegiance, and be counted among those who have the happiness to be your subjects.”

As the Camel ceased speaking the Fox stepped forward, and eloquently and humanely interceded for the captive: he represented to the Padishah how frequently animals really fell into error unconsciously; and made a delicate allusion to his own career — reminded his hearers, with a most sonorous sigh, of the days when he himself not only despised, but fed on Mice; and ultimately asked, with a noble consciousness of high desert, whether he had given the Emperor or the Empire reason to repent their mercy.

An universal and eager squeak of dissent

rose on all sides ; and as the Fox bowed gracefully in acknowledgment, the Padishah ordered the oath to be administered to the Camel, and the halter gnawed asunder, which was immediately done; and the emancipated prisoner followed his new master from the forest, a good deal impressed by the oration of the Fox, and reconciled by the presence of a companion in disgrace.

The troubles of others always assist in consoling us for our own.

CHAPTER VII.

THE KINGDOM OF THE MICE—*continued.*

THE subjugation of the Camel caused an immense commotion in the forest, and the mysterious prowess of the Mouse was canvassed on all sides, until the most extraordinary and magical tales became current; and animals of various kinds, not wishing to brave an influence which they could not comprehend, and anxious to continue a peaceable existence, voluntarily tendered their allegiance to the mice.

Shadows frequently frighten the crowd; and we always dread that evil the most of which we cannot define the limits.

The Fox revelled in power, and increased in popularity. He was never idle an hour; for when the state affairs of Mouseland were ar-

ranged, he was busied in ingratiating himself with their new allies, who gladly returned civilities by which they were likely to benefit. Presents poured in upon him ; and if occasionally in their desire to gratify his well known fondness for poultry, some of the beasts brought him a Stork or two, he only smiled at the mistake, and did not consider it expedient to inform them that they were destroying the saviours of the Mice !

But there was still a thorn in his heart. The Lion was unsubdued ! The king of the forest was unconquered ! And the Fox had registered a vow that every beast of the earth should own the power of his guile. With this resolution he therefore again presented himself at the carpet of the Padishah, and reported the contumacity of the Lion ; but the monarch of Mouseland appeared anxious to evade the subject ; and even stated to the excited Vèzir that he deemed it no dishonour to share the sovereignty of the earth with so noble an animal ; —and that indeed, he would rather live on terms of amity with him, than by provoking his anger run the risk of arousing a wrath which might be dangerous.

The Fox, with all respect, scouted this argu-

ment; and represented to the timid monarch that while the Lion continued to be lord of the forest, there was no safety for the Empire of the Mice, which he could destroy in one paroxysm of rage; and he begged to be permitted to remind the Padishah that the animal in question was celebrated for the irritability of his disposition, and his total disregard of the feelings of others, when he was inclined to gratify either his anger or his appetite; a fact which was too notorious to need comment.

The Emperor listened; and at length wearied by the arguments, and moved by the intreaties of his enterprising Vèzir, he consented to summon the Lion to his presence; and deputed the Fox Ambassador Extraordinary on the occasion.

Great was the indignation of the Lion when the Fox declared his mission; he lashed the sounding forest with his tail; he flung lightnings from his large eyes, bristled his wiry mane like a column of lances, and moistened the dust of he earth with the crimson drops which fell from his yawning jaws: his roar shook the young cedars to their roots; and he would instantly have devoured the Ambassador had he not already breakfasted, and despised him too

much to run the risk of a surfeit in the indulgence of his revenge.

A veil fell over the heart of the majesty of Mouseland at this new defeat; he had grown out of himself by his extraordinary successes; and every passenger who picks up ninety-nine piastres in his path, naturally feels aggrieved if he does not find the hundredth. Since the Fox had urged him to subjugate the Lion, the Lion had become to him the hundredth piastre; and he resented the failure accordingly.

"We had done better, oh! Vèzir;" he said sharply, "had we buried our displeasure in the hollow of our hearts, and closed our eyes to an evil which was beyond remedy, than thus to have laid it on our open palm, and lifted it to the light, on a hand which had no power to strike it down. When a monarch threatens without the means of vengeance, the escape of his enemy is his own defeat—and thus, oh, short-sighted minister! you have scattered the ashes of confusion on the head of your master!"

The Fox listened respectfully; nor did he attempt to justify himself, nor to remind the Pashah of the few trifling services which he had rendered him; though he might have done so in the full assurance of their being forgotten, as in

such cases all benefits are certain to be by the great ; but simply declaring to the irritated monarch that the Lion should yet be compelled to wear his yoke, he hastily quitted the presence.

Hunting with the Lion is but hungry work, and fighting with him is especially dangerous ; of this the Fox was well aware : and he therefore determined to eschew his present acquaintance either as friend or foe, and to find some go-between simple enough to run all risks for the mere honour of being employed.

There are many such brainless busy-bodies to be found everywhere, and the crafty Vèzir was an adept in the choice of his tools. He hesitated only a moment, and his resolution was taken. He had remarked in one of his rambles a neighbouring Jackall ; a poor spiritless, cowardly, cringing animal, who satisfied himself with the offal of the very game he had run down, for the weak gratification of keeping company with a Lion.

What a vast number of Jackalls there are in the world !

The Fox curled his tail in contemptuous satisfaction as he remembered the narrow-hearted slave, and trotted away to his lair without a

moment's misgiving as to the result of his undertaking.

"He will whiten my face once more in the eyes of all Mouse-land ;" he murmured to himself as he went ; "A base-spirited beast, who would barter his mother for a comfortable meal ! — Creatures of this description are readily worked upon ; so now for my new friend."

The negotiation was short, and the result perfectly satisfactory to both parties. The Fox caught two or three rabbits by the sly, and presented them to the Jackall, suffering him to devour the whole of them himself ; a liberal and delicate proceeding which was extremely agreeable to that animal, who was delighted for once to play the Lion's part, and who had never experienced the same attention before ; his *great* friend having a remarkably fine appetite, and seldom rejecting anything but garbage. An eternal regard was sworn between the new acquaintance in consequence ; and the Jackall licking his lips after his savoury repast, whispered his regret that the liberal, gentlemanly Fox, was not a Lion ; at which Reynard only laughed, assuring him that ere long, if he proved faithful to his pledge, he would convince him that in a war of wits one Fox was equal to two Lions.

Having given this very satisfactory assurance, and dropped a few more hints for the guidance of his groveling and beggarly ally, the Vèzir retired quietly to his burrow, and left the matter entirely to the exertions of the Jackall ; who, an hour or two after this pleasant interview rushed breathlessly into the presence of the contumacious Lion, and fell at his feet as if in the last agony.

“ How now, haramzadeh—base-born slave ! ” roared the monarch of the wood ; commencing, as from his superior strength and station, he had every right to do, by abuse of his caitiff-follower ; “ What dirt have you been eating, and what ass was your father, that you thus break in upon the slumber which has just succeeded to my repast ? Speak, recreant ! Who has threatened your ill-fed carcase with violence, that you come to play the craven in my very den ? ”

“ Dread lord and master ! ” faltered out the traitor ; “ forgive me if I tremble, and hear my tale before you chide my fears. I knew that my lord must dine ; and I was roaming the country in search of prey for the Mighty One before whom I bow, when suddenly there came forth of the thicket a Lion well nigh as lordly as yourself, who, seeing me in pursuit of game,

asked me for whom I hunted — Alas ! I could but reply by the truth, and I told him humbly but firmly that I served the lord of the forest ; ‘ Bè hèy—what’s this ? ’ he foamed, as he ground his strong teeth with rage ; ‘ Who is he who would be lord where my foot ranges, and my roar is heard ? Go, wretch, to the paltry animal whose slave you are, and bid him hide himself in the deepest den of the mountain, or the thickest underwood of the forest, lest I encounter him in my wanderings, and rend him piece-meal ! ’ Need I tell the Light of the Earth that I refused to be the bearer of such a message ? With what mitkal should I have measured out my lord’s bounty, had I undertaken an errand like this ? No ! I sought rather to remove all abomination from the beard of majesty, and answered in as high a tone ; and truly, most puissant Padishah of the forests, I had well nigh paid the karatch* as the penalty of my rashness ; for the imperious stranger sprang on me, and would have devoured me, had I not raised the dust of flight, and hastened to apprise my lord of his new enemy.”

Loud roared the Lion when he ceased to listen. He had long dwelt in solitary majesty,

* Capitation-tax levied on raiabs, or vassals.

the acknowledged monarch of the forest : and he resolved at once neither to abdicate his power, nor to dilute it by admitting a rival. Accordingly, with mane erect, eyeballs of fire, and a heart swelling with indignation, he bade the cowering Jackall guide him instantly to the spot where he had encountered his haughty enemy.

He was obeyed. The false craven trotted on before with alacrity ; and the mighty Lion followed, lashing the earth with his tail, and moistening the brushwood through which he made his way with the foam that fell in flakes from his parted lips. Their walk terminated near the mouth of a well, towards which the Jackall pointed as the den of the usurper ; and then, declining to advance further, crouched away, leaving the noble and betrayed Lion to terminate the adventure.

With all the impetuosity of rage, indignation, and jealousy, the infuriated animal sprang to the margin of the well ; where, reflected in the clear water, he beheld his own image, and thought that he was face to face with his enemy ; his hoarse and appalling roar of defiance was echoed by the deep murmurs of the tank ; and like many another hero, he leapt at a shadow, and

plunged head over ears into a bath for which he had been perfectly unprepared.

Away sped the Fox who had been contemplating from a distance the success of his stratagem, with his tail erect, and a roguish twinkle in his eye which betrayed his self-gratulation ; and affecting not to remark the coldness of his reception, he forthwith laid his paw upon his head, and informed the Majesty of Mouseland of the capture of the rebel Lion.

The intelligence acted like beng on the spirits of the monarch and his court, who sprang from side to side of the palace, squeaking with delight ; indeed, the popular commotion was so great that it was not for a considerable time that the Vèzir could command the royal ear sufficiently to suggest the expediency of an early visit to the prison of the captive. When, however, he had succeeded in so doing, the justice of the hint was at once admitted ; and in the pride of his little heart the Padishah of the Long-tails summoned the vassal-camel, who bending meekly on his knees, received the royal Mouse upon his hump, where he enthroned himself to the great admiration of the whole city.

“ Thrice-honoured animal ! ” said the exulting Monarch to the patient beast, who with

half-closed eyes, and drooping head, stood quietly awaiting the signal to depart : “ Your’s is no common lot : see that you sink not beneath the responsibility of your office, but look well to your path ; for remember that you bear the weight of sovereignty, and the hope of an entire Empire !”

“ Powerful Padishah !” replied the stupid animal, with a fullness of truth, and a want of tact, which at once demonstrated to the Fox the little probability there existed of his ever rising into favour at Court ; “ My path is easy, and my burthen is light. Were it not, indeed, that I felt your Majesty mount ; and that as you ran up my side, I experienced the same tickling sensation as that caused by those anaseney sikdam — those poor pitiful insects, the forest-flies, when they sometimes alight upon me, I should not have been aware that I bore any burthen at all. Be tranquil therefore, oh, Lord of the Long-tails, for I could carry you round El Caf without feeling your weight.”

As the Camel ceased speaking, the royal Mouse was seized with a violent fit of sneezing ; and the Fox took the opportunity of this fit of sternutation to wipe away the tears of suppressed laughter from his brimming eyes.

What a beautiful thing is truth ! How it always advances a man's interests !

When the party reached the well, the pigmy Monarch descended from his elevated position, and established himself on its margin, whence he looked down with infinite complacency on the drenched and desponding Lion.

"Bouroum, Seid !*—You are welcome ;" he said smilingly : "both to our territories and to our tanks. Had you been more courteous, we should have received you in a less inconvenient hall of audience ; but as it is, we have deemed it expedient to steep the bread of disobedience in the waters of defeat, and you must swallow the meagre meal as you can."

There was admirable policy in this speech of the Padishah's, as your Highness cannot fail to remark ; for, as the Mouse saw no means of delivering his formidable captive, he resolved to make necessity appear design, and to seem to abandon him through displeasure to a fate, from which in point of fact he had no possible hope or prospect of setting him free.

But ere the humbled and exhausted Lion could reply, the Fox approached the well, and, seizing

* Lion.

the royal ear, whispered to the monarch that the friendship of so powerful and respectable an animal would greatly tend to exalt his glory ; and that, if his majesty could induce the prisoner to swear allegiance to the throne of Mouseland, he would undertake to secure his liberation.

“ But, Vèzir of quick wit and sound knowledge, whose head, under the shadows of our greatness, is raising itself to the clouds ;” said the Padishah, with that beautiful modesty and caution for which he was deservedly renowned ; “ Suppose that when once again on dry land, the mighty Seid should laugh at our beards, how could we contend against his furious revenge ? ”

“ Bashustun — on my head be it ! ” was the reply of the councillor : “ The Lion is an honourable beast ; he will disdain a lie : brave to a fault, he will do battle for his new master against all comers ; generous and high-hearted, he will never look back upon the past, for he knows that what is written is written ; and we shall thus secure an ally who will be as a footstool to the throne, and as an eye to the state.”

“ Wallah billah ! it is well said ;” squeaked the willing Mouse ; and then once more address-

ing the Lion, he exclaimed majestically : “ Said we not well that we would leave you here to perish, and to die the death of a dog ? Have you ought to urge in denial ? Does it not depend on us, and on our pleasure, whether you live or expire miserably amid the suffocating waters ? And yet we would fain be merciful, and not see your strength wither, and your eye grow dim. How say you, vanquished Seid, will you become our willing vassal, our loving ally, one of the pillars of our state ? ”

The Lion opened his ponderous jaws to their extremest width, to give utterance to the bitter contempt he felt for the wretched little animal who thus addressed him ; but, alas ! when the words should have come forth, the water rushed down his throat, and he was nearly choked ; and faint, exhausted, and powerless as he was, he felt that in order to preserve his wretched existence, he had no alternative but to swallow an oath, which, however, at the moment, was even more suffocating than the water. When he had done so, the Camel was once more freighted with the load of royalty ; and the train of courtiers having taken the way back to the subterranean city, the Fox at once proceeded to effect the liberation of his new associate.

Not far distant from the well which had snared the Lion to his ruin, was a lake of some extent, whence in times of drought, the husbandmen of the province irrigated their lands by means of engines, which threw the water into small canals that intersected the plain, and increased the vigorous vegetation. One of these channels was in the immediate neighbourhood ; and the Fox lost no time in breaking down the clay aqueduct, and suffering the stream to pour into the treacherous tank, until it overflowed, and the Lion was enabled to walk forth, shake his dripping mane, and warm his trembling limbs in the bright sunshine.

When he had recovered his breath, the first impulse of the generous beast was to make his acknowledgements to his deliverer for so signal a piece of service ; and the modesty of the Fox was so conspicuous in his reply, that the Lion frankly apologised for the contempt in which he had hitherto held all his race, and vowed to him an earnest and eternal friendship.

“ Good deeds, oh Reynard ;” he said gently ; “ ever secure their own reward. Be not disgusted by so trite an apothegm, but ever let it urge you to kind and generous actions like that of this day.”

The Fox could have laughed at the Lion's beard, but he scarcely thought it prudent to do so; and, perhaps, when the singular inappropriateness of the remark is considered, he had some cause for mirth; but, unconscious of the feeling with which his words had been received, the royal animal, as they pursued their way to the palace of the Mouse, related to his companion the treachery of the false and cowardly Jackall; and uttered many a bitter apostrophe on his ingratitude, which, had the recreant overheard them, would have sufficed to kill him with sheer fright.

It is perhaps needless to say that the Fox joined heartily in the anathema, and exasperated still more the anger of the Lion; until having wrought him up to the last pitch of rage, he bade him be calm, for that so black a traitor was not fit to live, and assured him that die he should. He hinted, however, that it would be as well to say nothing on the subject at Court, as the race of Jackalls were under the protection of the Padishah of the Long tails, and that consequently justice must be done silently.

The Lion acquiesced at once; and the ceremony of his presentation having taken place, greatly to the delight of Mouseland, and his

own disgust, he was permitted to retire to his den ; an arrangement highly honourable and considerate on the part of the Padishah, who felt his inability to detain him a moment longer than he chose to stay for the amusement of his new masters.

That very night the Fox supped from the hind quarter of a very lean Jackall ; and the Lion never again encountered the treacherous slave by whom he had been betrayed.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE KINGDOM OF THE MICE—*continued.*

DID your Highness ever experience the shock of an earthquake ? Of one of those mysterious convulsions of Nature which defy alike the power and the policy of man — when the whole world appears to be crumbling into dust, and to be insufficient to fill up the yawning chasm, dark and insatiate, which gapes to receive the universal ruin ! When the voice of the human race is but one common shriek of agony ; and the great globe seems to be one common grave ? When not even the prospect of the sherbets of Paradise can quench the hot thirst of terror ; nor the vision of its houri destroy the bitterness of death ? Nay, then, if you have not, my lord has been more favoured than was the Padishah of Mouse-

land when his subterranean kingdom was shaken to its base — his palace prostrated, his cities laid waste, and his subjects destroyed by thousands, and cumbering the streets with their maimed and mangled bodies !

All was consternation among the miserable survivors ; an universal squeak of mourning rent the air ; and fathers, sons, and lovers ; matrons, and maidens, collected about the victims to gaze upon their dead. In despair at so frightful a visitation, the monarch of Mouseland summoned the Fox, the Camel, and the Lion to his presence ; and they came only to find him steeped in sorrow to the very whiskers : — What was to be done ? The noble Seid offered battle on the instant, but against whom was he to fight ? The Camel suggested the erection of a new palace, and the founding of a new city, but where were the architects to plan, and the workmen to build it ? The Fox only advised patience ; and promised to trace the evil to its origin, and to prevent its recurrence.

As all the population of Mouseland had great faith in the power of their Vèzir to fulfil his pledges, they were in some degree consoled ; and many hours were passed in burying the dead, and digging a few underground apart-

ments for the accommodation of the wounded ; when suddenly another mighty crash at a little distance once more overwhelmed them with terror ; and they ran off in every direction to avert the new destruction by which they were threatened.

But on this occasion they were subjected only to alarm ; for the evil had fallen on the colony of their enemies the Jerhuahs ; and they were slowly recovering from their panic when the Fox appeared at their ruined walls, and informed the desponding Padishah that he had discovered the author of the evil to be a huge Elephant, who at sunset emerged from the woods into the plain, and recklessly trod down the roofs of the subterranean cities.

The Lord of the Long-tails trembled as he listened ; but his Vèzir affected to hold their new enemy cheaply, and reminded the Padishah that he had subjugated the mighty Lion—What, then, could he fear ? Nay, for the first time since he had accepted office, he suggested that a new envoy should be chosen by the monarch from among his own nation ; and so composedly did he talk on the subject, that the weak Mouse began to be once more puffed up with pride, and forgetful of his own insignificance ; and in this frame of mind he pitched

upon a young, sprightly, smart-whiskered Bey of the household, whom he furnished with the proper credentials, and deputed his Ambassador.

To the full as vain as his master, the mouse-ling of quality retreated to his hole, where he gave his whiskers a more diplomatic and important twist, smoothed his slender tail into more graceful glossiness, and adorned himself in the most approved manner, ere he departed on his embassy, which he did with a brisk run that promised a speedy return.

The reappearance of the unfortunate envoy took place, however, with even more dispatch than had been anticipated: for the Elephant, amused rather than indignant at the insolence of the spruce-looking little reptile, had only answered his summons by blowing him many yards on his homeward path, with the wind from his mighty trunk; and in sorry plight, as your Highness may well imagine, did the poor dapper diplomatist throw himself down before the carpet of majesty, and tell his tale of disgrace.

“Who can war against his fate, Light of the Earth!” he concluded, as the Padishah bent upon him an eye of disappointment and disgust: “Who can controul the elements? What animal

could have braved the whirlwind by which I was lifted from the earth, flung against the clouds, and swept along over an infinity of space? Ne bilirim — what can I say? The ashes of defeat are strown upon my head — the defilement of disgrace is on my beard — the anger of the Great One of the Earth, the Refuge of the World has clutched my heart, and stopped its pulsations."

But the Padishah was not to be appeased ; the Fox was summoned to the conference, requested to become the executioner of the discomfited Ambassador, (whom he very submissively snapped up before the words were well out of the royal mouth;) and solicited to tender his opinion of the most desirable step to be next taken in this very unpleasant affair.

The wily Vèzir asked for an hour to deliberate ; although, feeling convinced that his agency would be required, he had already matured his plans ; and at the termination of that period, he demanded from the king a strong detachment of Mice, who were to act solely under his orders.

With this party he at once quitted the ruined city, and advanced to the deep bed of an exhausted river, traversed by a wooden bridge,

which the Elephant was compelled to cross during his periodical visits to the plain. The channel of the stream closed suddenly to the right and left of this bridge, the rocks being high and jagged, and almost meeting over head, not many feet above the level of the water ; and in consequence of this circumstance, the bridge had been flung over a wider portion of the river, and rested only upon a deep chalky vein of soil, running far into the valley, and suddenly terminating in a hollow, not twenty stadia distant from the capital of Mouseland.

On arriving at the bridge, the Fox at once commenced operations by instructing his troops to gnaw partially asunder the ropes and pins which united the woodwork, so as to render it insecure for any heavy weight ; and the consequences of this step are evident. The next time the Elephant endeavoured to pass, his enormous bulk proved an over-freight for the frail fabric, and he fell headlong into the bed of moist chalk, without power to move either to the right or left, where the rocky barrier fenced in the channel.

In this emergency, the sagacity, strength, and intelligence of the animal, availed him nothing. He was fairly in the toils ; and was

only another example among many, of a creature ruined by his own greatness, and destroyed by the very attributes on which he had been wont to pride himself.

Off ran the Fox when he saw the result of his stratagem ; and the destruction of half Mouse-land was forgotten in the triumph of such a capture. Many of the dead were still unburied ; but their fate was overlooked in the general rejoicing that made the whole Empire one shrill squeak of proud delight.

These things are alike among men and mice, your Highness. Who heeds in the pageant and parade which celebrate a victory, the victims who have fallen to secure it ?

The vain-gloriousness of the King of the Long-tails was at its height. He issued all sorts of contradictory orders — commanded and countermanded—and all in order to keep the different animals who had become his vassals, on the run. Here flew a Rat ; there rushed a Badger —a Squirrel sprang on one side, and a Chamois leapt on the other ; the whole plain was in convulsions ; and ever and anon the roar of the captured Elephant came booming along the valley like a thunder-peal.

All this was very delightful, but every plea-

sure must have a termination ; and his Highness the Padishah was partially recalled to reason by a hint from the Fox, that although a captive, the mighty Elephant was not yet a vassal ; and that his subjugation required instant attention.

Unable to controvert so cogent an argument, the monarch at once declared himself ready to be guided by the counsels of his Vèzir ; though he could not avoid reminding him that this was no slight concession from a sovereign who was now lord of the whole brute creation, with the exception of the Elephant, who was then in his toils.

The Fox bowed low, and laughed --but the bow was to the Padishah, and the laugh to himself, and he consequently avoided giving any offence ; while he assured the potentate with all due respect and reverence, that in the event of his inducing the Elephant to acknowledge his authority, he would undertake to release him from his present thrall.

The royal cortège was immediately in motion. First marched two fierce and shaggy Bears, wielding huge staffs, and growling forth the many and mighty titles of the Padishah. Then followed a band of female Monkeys, dancing fantastic measures to the music of a score of

bare-backed Apes. These were succeeded by a company of Porcupines, who shot their quills right and left upon the crowd, which threatened to impede the line of march. Then came a couple of Asses, braying out with lungs of iron the near approach of the Refuge of the World, and Lord of the Earth; who followed, mounted upon the hump of the Camel, having on his right the merry Fox, to whom the pageant was food for unmeasured mirth; and on his left the crest-fallen and disgusted Lion, who stalked solemnly along, his heart burning with shame as he remembered how sorry a figure he should make in the eyes of his old acquaintance the Elephant.

We could always support our misfortunes themselves with philosophy; it is their effect on the minds, and their influence on the opinions of others, that unman us.

A guard of honour, composed of wild Goats, surrounded the mighty monarch; and immediately behind them came a tall Ourang-outan, carrying a palm-leaf, on which, shaded from the public gaze by fans formed of the beard of the bulrush, lay the three favourite wives of the Padishah; two more animals of the same description, but of less stately proportions, bore

the slaves of the harem. The light troops were represented by a group of Chamois; while the heavy regiments were most appropriately composed of Buffaloes; and in this state and fashion did the King of the Mice journey towards the prison-place of the Elephant; of whom he no sooner caught sight than he exclaimed in a transport of very natural delight:

“ Why, how is this, oh, Vèzir of power and wisdom! Have you brought us here only to show us one of our own brethren? No resemblance can be more perfect; save that, indeed, nature has been unkind to our poor captive, in visiting him with such a mass of flesh, and such a length of nose; but these are deformities which, being ourselves happily exempt, we know how to pity in others: had not this misfortune attended his birth, we should have been as like as two drops of water. Speak, cousin!” he continued, addressing the enormous animal with a patronising gentleness which drew tears from his wives, and convulsed the Fox with merriment; “ What would you of us?”

No answer was made, for in truth the Elephant did not either see or hear the Monarch; and was lost in wonder at what this meeting of so many divers animals in his immediate neighbourhood might portend.

116 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

Meanwhile the Padishah moved forward, and transferring himself from the hump of the Camel to the capacious back of the Elephant, began to walk towards his head, examining him most minutely, and occasionally switching his tail with self-gratulation and importance; when, unfortunately chancing to pass over a spot where the huge beast was particularly susceptible to the touch, and deemed that some fly had alighted with the intent to sting him, he gave a flap with his long ear, and down fell his majesty into the wet clay!

The whole court was in commotion: the Lady-mice squeaked, and their slaves, as in duty bound, squeaked still louder; the Bears growled, the Asses brayed, the female Monkeys chattered, and the Apes grinned; the Porcupines rolled themselves up, the Lion roared, the Camel screamed, the Fox almost went into convulsions, the wild Goats shook their beards, the Chamois leapt from rock to rock, and the Buffaloes laid down, and began to chew the cud of distress. And in the mean time, the monarch, after a vast deal of scrambling and struggling, got safely out of the mire, and reappeared among his people, all chalk, mud, and misery!

But his was not a soul to be subdued by one

downfall ; and as soon as he could unfasten his jaws, which were cemented together most unpleasantly, and recover his breath, he vowed vengeance on the Elephant, and began to dry his whiskers.

The Fox took this opportunity of coming forward, and assuring his majesty that the crime of the animal had been involuntary ; and of reminding him that the privilege of the powerful was to show mercy, coupled with an intimation that he craved the pardon of the offender in the name of the whole court and army.

Thus urged, the heart of the Padishah softened ; and the Elephant, being very soon convinced by the representations of the Fox, that his only chance of deliverance lay in his swearing fealty to the Lord of the Long-tails, and consoled for his misfortune by the vassalage of the Lion, at length consented to the indignity ; when having administered the oath, the Padishah, yet shivering from his immersion, and considerably shaken by his fall from so prodigious a height, withdrew with all his court in the same order as he had set out ; while the Fox hastily collected together a numerous army of miners, composed of beavers, ferrets, rabbits, badgers, mungoshaes, rats, mice, and moles, and set them immediately

to work to undermine the chalk bank which intervened between the channel of the river and the hollow already mentioned.

As they were in immense numbers, laboured heartily, and were considerably assisted by the Elephant himself, he was enabled by sunrise the next morning to force his way through the crumbling barrier, and to obey the summons of the Padishah ; who sat enthroned on an ear of maize, surrounded by deputations from all the vassal-animals of the province.

When he had reached the presence, and made his obeisance, the Fox respectfully advanced to the throne, holding between his teeth a ripe sugar-cane, which he presented to his majesty as a delicious refection, and, moreover, an extraordinary curiosity, which he humbly invited him to inspect. The Padishah, who delighted in novelties, at once declared his intention to examine the gift of his esteemed minister and friend ; and, having given permission to his wives, and the Prince Royal his only child, to accompany him, which they lost no time in doing, he disappeared into the hollow of the cane, followed by his family.

Standing close beside the Fox was a long-armed Ape, his especial slave, who had long

nursed a bitter spite against the whole Empire of Mouseland ; and no sooner had the tip of the last Imperial tail vanished, than on receiving an encouraging wink from the Fox, he adroitly blocked up the orifice with clay, and secured all the royal family !

A low murmur was rising on every side, when the Fox, contemptuously kicking aside the throne of the Mouse, thus addressed the surrounding animals—

“ Beasts of the chase, and of burthen ; my most worthy friends and subjects ; I have collected you together this day, through my slave the Mouse, to declare to you how I have earned for myself the sovereignty of the brute creation ; and in order to prove to all animals, from the lordly Lion to the drudging Mole, that neither strength nor insignificance could secure their possessors from my rule, I made my tool of a sorry Mouse. To that weak, pigmy, miserable reptile, have ye all bowed your haughty heads, to save your forfeit lives. Friends and vassals ! The Imperial Mouse has abdicated, the Imperial family is extinct ! I am your Emperor ; and I commence my reign by an apophthegm.

“ When courage has failed before craft ; and the mighty in frame have been bowed beneath the

mighty in intellect ; the rings of obedience can never be rent from the ears of defeat : and the arrows of ambition will always rebound from the sun of royalty, upon the heads of those who bend the rebellious bow !”

As the self-elected monarch ceased speaking, he gazed around him with a look of proud defiance ; placed his foot upon the sugar-cane in which the unhappy Mice were dying of suffocation, as upon a footstool ; and seemed to dare a dissentient murmur. But none arose ; for the assembled animals, humbled by the consciousness of their disgraceful vassalage to a wretched reptile, of whom the more wily Fox had made first a tool and then a prey ; and, startled into concession by the sudden and unlooked-for assumption of an animal, under whose guile and quick-wittedness they had all severally writhed, could not deny the superiority of their new master ; a superiority which he could make them feel at any moment, and in any emergency, when brute force could not avail : they therefore with one accord offered their obeisance, and acknowledged him as their ruler.

One able diplomatist can secure more triumphs than an army of lances.

PART II.

CHAPTER IX.

“AJAIB—wonderful!” murmured the Tchorbadji as he flung another purse into the lap of the young Greek: “I could listen to her for ever; her voice is like the sighing of the wind through the light branches of the jasmin. Ma-shallah! she is a wonder! What is written, is written—I will purchase this fair slave, mother.”

“May my lord’s will be all-powerful!” gasped out the terrified Nevrestè, as she again prostrated herself to the earth; “had it been any almè of my troop save Mherpirwir and Sèidika, would I not have given her to my lord for gold? But these two—”

“What of these two?” demanded the Tchorbadji with a lowering brow and a stern gaze;

“ Whose dog are you to thwart me in my humour? I will purchase the slave for seven purses.”

“ Let not my lord blacken the face of his servant;” persisted the old woman; “ the slave is not mine. The Camalcan of Stamboul had heard of the talent of this young Massaldji from the Bynbashi of the troops of Damascus, and he has already paid a heavy price for her to her late master. She is even now on her way to Iskuidar,* where a slave waits to conduct her to the harem of her new lord. How then can I obey? Am I not as nothing in this matter?”

“ Tarik—beware!” frowned the Tchorbadji; “ that you deceive me not; there are no feet so swift in all Roum but that the cord is swifter. The slave pleases me, and I am ready to pay her price.”

“ Will my lord heap ashes upon the head of his servant?” asked Nevrestè; “ Can the fig-tree bear grapes, or the olive produce dhourra? How then can I give up a maiden who is not mine?”

“ And what says the Massaldji herself?” asked the Tchorbadji, looking kindly on the disguised Greek; “ Would she be content to in-

* Scutari.

habit my harem, and to weave the threads of eloquence into the web of fiction to please the ears which would be ever open to listen?"

"The Tchorbadji is lord;" said Maniolo-polo, as calmly as his agitation would permit him to reply; "If the Camalcan of Stamboul be content to leave his slave unreclaimed, then are her poor services at his will. Let the Pasha (may his house prosper!) decide in this matter."

This suggestion at once recalled the worthy Janissary to his reason, and reminded him that he could not take the beard of the Minister in his hand, as though it were that of an oda-bashi* or a naib;† and determined therefore to rid himself of the affair at once, he said coldly:

"Min Allah! why should I trouble my lord the Pasha for this thing? Are there not many Massaldjis in the land? What is the spoil for which I should contend? Avret der—it is a woman—it is bosh—nothing."

For a moment there was silence; and Maniolo-polo watched with considerable anxiety the countenance of the Tchorbadji, who continued to smoke with great energy, and a contraction of eye-brow by no means indicative of internal satisfaction; while the almè slowly rising from

* Corporal.

† Cadi's clerk.

the floor, at the signal of Nevrestè, prepared to renew their dances. A wave of the host's hand, however, prevented their purpose ; and muttering something of the lateness of the hour, he gravely descended from the sofa, and without again glancing towards the dancers, abruptly quitted the harem.

When he had fairly disappeared, all was once more hilarity ; and the young beauty on the sofa smiled out her pretty scorn at the sudden whim of the Tchorbadji, who had poured forth his soul on first sight of an awali, whom she vowed, by the grave of her mother, had a light in her eyes which was nothing less than modest.

Nevrestè ventured to remonstrate, and to uphold the propriety of her handsome companion ; greatly to the amusement of the lady, who called the dark-browed awali to the cushion at her feet, where she playfully toyed with the long tresses of raven hair that fell upon her shoulders, and bade her tell how many hearts she had broken since her bright black eyes had learned the art in which they were such adepts.

Maniolopolò, to whom his position was irksome in the extreme, despite the small white hand, and soft accents of the fair wife of the Tchorbadji, answered her by a timid glance, as

he resumed his zebec ; and having preluded for a moment in melancholy cadences, as though sad recollections had been awakened by the question, at length murmured out in a subdued voice his low and thrilling reply. The air which he selected was wild as the summer wind — it was a Sciote melody ; and it brought with it a thousand memories of the past, which heightened its expression of energy and passion.

THE ALMÈ'S SONG.

Who loves the Almè ? Oh, mock me not now
 With the light of that eye, and the calm of that brow ;
 For thee, such as thee, were those blessed hours made,
 When sunshine is looked, and when music is said ;
 But the Almè, though bright her young beauty may be,
 Can ne'er know the bliss that is lavished on thee !

Who loves the Almè ? Her step may be light,
 Her form may be graceful, her eye may be bright,
 Her ear may drink in the most eloquent words
 That e'er swept like a spell o'er the young spirit's chords ;
 But the Almè's crushed heart to despondence is vow'd
 When her brow is unveiled to the gaze of the crowd.

Then ask not the Almè, proud beauty, to tell
 The tales of the past in her memory that dwell ;
 Rather bid her forget that on earth there can be
 A being so loved and so lovely as thee ;
 Lest, wild with despair such a contrast to meet,
 She fling off her garland, and die at thy feet !

A stifled sob met the ear of Maniolopolò as he laid aside the instrument ; he involuntarily turned in the direction whence it came, and saw Mherpirwir slowly moving away ; and his heart smote him that in order the better to sustain his disguise, he had suffered himself to be betrayed into any expressions calculated to wound the fair and gentle girl, who had so zealously embraced his cause, and risked her own safety to conduce to his happiness. Nevrestè had served him for gold, and had secured the wages of her concession ; the other almè had simply and blindly fulfilled the pledge of obedience to which they were vowed : but there was something at the heart of the young Greek that told him of a deeper and a more anxious interest on the part of Mherpirwir. True, she was assisting him to look upon one whom he loved—but the experience of the fair dancing-girl had taught her no tale of constancy on the part of lovers. In the sky of her destiny she had seen ray after ray of the young heart's brightness clouded by the vapours of distrust and change ; she had heard murmurs from the sweetest lips in the world, and seen tears in the loveliest eyes ; and Mherpirwir was no logician. Maniolopolò was a Greek, a Giaour ; a despised one like herself.

He could worship the wife of the Moslem only as a bright shape limned on the summer cloud—a laughing light on the sunny wave—something impalpable and transitory—while, could *she* win him!—But here the heart of the girl beat painfully, and a deep blush burned for an instant on her brow—No, no; she would think no more; she *dared* not.

Some portion of the truth had already intruded itself on Maniolopolò; he had known the almè only a few hours, but there was a softened light and a timid expression in her deep eye when it was turned on him, that revealed her secret.

His melancholy ballad had smitten the fair girl with a painful conviction which had never before so thoroughly forced itself upon her. Who was she that she thus had dared to hope that she might appropriate the heart of one like Maniolopolò! Was not the very name of an almè the byword of scorn and contumely? Were not all the troop at the beck of every stranger who spread gold upon his palm, to divert his idleness, and to obey his behests? What had she to do with love, with tenderness, with passion? Alas! nothing—Maniolopolò had laid bare before her the deso-

lation of her lot ; she might weep away her spirit, and steep her heart in tears ; there was no hand to wipe them away, no voice to soothe, no arm to uphold her : and for a moment as the dancing-girl moved from the side of the young Greek, a cold chill stole through her veins, and if she could at that instant be said to *feel*, it was the hard, cold, stern rigidity of the marble which bears the impress of beauty without its vitality. But the death-like paroxysm, the strong spasm of despair, endured not long : the victim was too young to be thus emancipated from suffering ; the spirit-thrall had more bitter pangs in store ; and the awakening from this transient immobility was more crushing than years of murmured suffering.

The night was far advanced when Nevrestè gave the signal for departure ; and the wife of the Tchorbadji dismissed her guests with courtesy and gifts far exceeding their expectations ; nor did she invite their return, for the admiration of her lord had been too manifest towards the disguised Sëidika to render that personage a welcome guest : and the troop had already passed the threshold of the harem, and Maniolopolò was carefully guiding the footsteps of the trembling Mherpirwir along the rude

pavement of the steep street which led to the Theriaki Tcharchi, while the old woman followed closely behind them, when they were suddenly met by one of the chaoushes* of the Pasha, preceded by a seratch† bearing a paper lantern, who approaching Nevrestè exclaimed :

“ Bè hey — What’s this, mother ? You are abroad at an unseemly hour with your flock of peris : I have been to the Tcharchi, the devil’s nest, in which you have housed yourself (and Wallah billah ! ’tis no pleasant task to thread that quarter of the city after nightfall !), on a mission from his Highness the Pasha (may his beard flourish !). He has heard strange tales of one of your almè, and he honours you by a summons to his harem to-morrow evening at sunset : so prepare your moon-faced beauties, and be careful not to fail at the appointed hour ; but seize your good fortune with the grasp of security, and when the river in the west yonder runs gold, see that you stand before the door of the Pasha’s harem, or the grave of your father will be defiled, and the soles of your feet unfitted for speedy travel.”

The old woman bowed her obedience, and murmured out a thousand assurances of her de-

* Officer of the household. † Servant of a bey.

light at the summons ; and when the chaoush and his attendant had passed on, she moved to the side of Maniolopolo, and whispered : “ Wal-lah ! your star is in the ascendant, young sir ; your kismet is propitious ; but is your heart strong, and your pulse steady ? Sen bilirsen — you know best. For my own part, I will trust you. I sell you my neck for two purses, and the present of the Pasha ; take care that I do not make a bad bargain, and find it in the noose through any folly of your mad passion.”

“ Korkma—fear not, mother ;” said the young Greek ; “ For my own sake, *and for her's*, I will look thrice at my words before I utter them. What is written, is written — my felech hath placed me in your hands, and opened the door of the Pasha's harem to my eager foot. What says the proverb ? ‘ When you find water, drink it ; when you find a bridge, pass over it.’ I found the water of despair, and drained a deep draught ; and now I find the bridge of hope, I am resolved, and ready to cross it.”

“ Sen ektiar der — you are the master ;” said Nevrestè : “ and I am your slave. And now, here we are at the Tcharchi, where you can deposit your disguise until to-morrow — Aghour ola—Heaven speed you in your purpose ; for

you have a bold spirit and a true heart, giaoür though you be."

With this blessing Maniolo polo took leave of the old woman ; and having silently pressed the slender fingers of Mherpirwir within his own, retired to the apartment where he had assumed his disguise ; and having laid aside the veil and antery, and replaced them by the turban and beenish* in which he was accustomed to traverse the city at night, he hastened from the Theriaki Tcharchi which was already loud with revelry and riot.

* Cloak.

CHAPTER X.

IT was a glorious noon ! The sun rode high in heaven ; the bees were busy among the bean-flowers ; the butterflies flitted hither and thither, like blossoms loosened from their stems by the summer-wind to be the bright companions of his sport ; the golden-armoured fish leapt high above the silver bosomed fountain, and fell back glittering with the light ; the sky was a vault of turquoise ; and the leaves sang a pleasant melody at the bidding of the breeze. Nor was this all ; for the laughter of childhood and the low sweet voice of woman came softly to the ear, as Saïfula Pasha, with a slow step and a preoccupied spirit, silently paced to and fro the tree-shadowed terrace that stretched along beneath the windows of his harem. In one hand he held his amber-

lipped chibouque of jasmin wood ; the other was buried amid the folds of his girdle ; his lips were slightly compressed ; his head declined ; and at times he drew a long breath like one whose spirit was over-laden with thought.

His selictar-aga* and his chibouque-bashi† followed at a short distance, but did not even converse in whispers ; so bewildered were they by the sudden restlessness of their master. At length the Satrap paused, and pointing to a spot where the shadows fell deep and cool, a slave obeyed the signal, and spread his carpet, upon which he seated himself, while his attendants with officious zeal arranged his cushions, prepared his pipe, and performed for him all the little offices of attentive zeal.

“ Mazzouk ;” said the Pasha, when his selictar-aga alone stood beside him, all the other attendants having respectfully retired : “ there is a weight upon my spirit ; the labours of the divan have wearied me. I hate the contact to which I am subjected by the supineness of that dog the Cadi, who is not worth the pillauf he destroys — Mashallah ! He is an ass, and the father of asses ! ”

The Satrap paused, and threw out a long thin

* Sword-bearer.

† Keeper of the pipe.

thread of smoke from his chibouque, which curled for a moment about his bright and jetty beard ; and the selictar-aga bowed his acquiescence in the opinion of his master with an unction which admitted no doubt of his sincerity.

“ To see the divan,” pursued the Pasha ; “ one would imagine that the city was one vast Timerhazè !* They are not men whom he brings before me for judgment ; haivan der—they are animals—creatures from whom you may wring their heart’s blood more easily than their piastres—Haif ! haif !—shame, shame ! I have sat there three hours this day in the name of the Prophet, and not a single purse has passed into the treasury.”

“ Mashallah ! He is a dog, and deserves the cord ;” said the attendant coolly.

“ Am I not the shadow of the Padishah ?” continued the Pasha in a low tone of concentrated anger ; “ And shall he not have justice ? Let him look to it if things do not change. Inshallah ! I wrong no man.”

A few moments of silence succeeded, and again the Satrap spoke : “ And this Frank, this infidel dog, of whom he told me in full divan

* Mad-house.

not a month back, who scattered his money in the city streets, and made an okkal* of his dwelling, where all who came were welcome ; what has become of him ? With whose hattisheriffe † has he passed the gates ? By Allah ! there has been treason—and the Cadi has played the codgea-basha, and levied tribute for himself."

" Bashustun — on my head be it ! My lord the Pasha has his foot on the neck of the ghorumsak ;" said the selictar-aga, turning aside to spit out his contempt of the Cadi.

" Have you heard aught of this spendthrift Frank ?" asked the Pasha ; " If it be as the Cadi says, he must be well known in the city."

" Your slave has heard that the stranger is no Frank ;" was the reply ; " but a rascally Greek from the Islands, who has been laughing at the beards of the True Believers, and calling himself a Gaul."

" Ha ! is it so ?" said the Satrap, a gleam of pleasure passing over his swarthy countenance ; " Then by the soul of his mother, he shall pay dearly for his insolence. A Greek ! Where is the karatch ?† He shall pay it to the uttermost

* Tavern.

† Firman.

‡ Capitation tax levied on raiyahs.

para ; aye, to the uttermost. You shall talk with him, Mazzouk ; and you know your duty."

The selictar-aga laid his hand upon his heart, and smiled.

" Shall we have our faces blackened by a rāiah ?" pursued the Satrap : " a vile slave who was born under the yoke ? and whose cunning has taught him to take shelter in the name of a Frank Khawaji ?* And a Gaul too ! Were there not Russians and English enough between Scanderia and Stamboul, but he must call himself a Gaul !"

" The slave is as keen as a makaisa ;" † said the selictar-aga, selecting a simile which was as professional as it was apt ; " Had he written himself either Russ or Briton we might have read the cheat, for these Giaours are all as like from Ramazan to Ramazan, as the pearls in my lord's turban ; and they who have once known one of the unclean dogs, can tell him again even should they meet on the edge of the Great Desart ; but the Gaul is as changeful as the shadows of the tempest on the waters of Boulac ; and there is no swearing to his beard."

" And how know you this ?" asked the Pasha, amazed at the erudition of his attendant ; " Have

* Merchant.

† Short-sword.

you plunged your fingers into the same pillauf with the Unbelievers that you can tell the signs of their uncleanness?"

" May the hand of your slave perish if it hath done this!" said the functionary solemnly: " Whose dog am I that I should defile my own grave? I learned the secret from a hadji who had travelled to the far east; and who told me that a mighty Schah, who knew little of the infidel nations of the west, and who sought to learn in what the Giaours of those lands of darkness differed the one from the other, employed a famous painter, who could cunningly spread the tints of the rainbow over the surface of the papyrus, and create bright shapes that wanted only breath and life to make them equal to the houris, to trace for him a Giaour of every land within the circle of El Caf, that so he might, should any of these restless barbarians travel to his court, be able at once to tell to what nation he belonged. But I weary my lord——"

" Go on;" said the Pasha; " I listen."

" The painter obeyed the Imperial command;" pursued the selictar-aga with encreased animation, encouraged by the unusual attention of his master; " and he soon laid upon the step of the throne so many tight-vested and whis-

kered effigies that the Schah had nearly expired with mirth ; but at length he came to one where the Giaour stood unclothed, holding in his hand a web of silk ; and he demanded from the painter in what land the men thus unblushingly dispensed with the garments which they possessed the means of fashioning. ‘ May my lord’s shadow never decrease !’ said the painter : ‘ In no country of the west where the Giaours have learned to weave the produce of the worm or the cotton tree, do they thus deprive themselves of the fruits of their industry. I have therefore laid before the eyes of my lord, the garb of every nation save one, for elsewhere the garment of to-day may be worn to-morrow ; but with the Gaul it is not so ; and had I made for him a dress to any given measure, though at sunrise he might have been distinguished by it from all the nations of the earth, at sunset it would have borne no more resemblance to his actual appearance than the lotus bears to the olive tree, or the stork to the blue dove. I have therefore given him the material unfashioned, in order that my lord the Schah may imagine for him, each time that he looks upon the picture, a new and distinct costume.’ Thus then, Light of the Earth ;” continued the selictar-agá, bowing low

before his master ; “ I deem that the Greek slave has called himself a Gaul, dreading that your penetration and knowledge would have detected the imposture had he declared himself to be the subject of any other land.”

“ Hai, hai—true, true ;” said the Satrap with a grim smile ; “ but Alhemdullilah — praise be to Allah ! he will not escape even thus. We are not to suffer the sand of the desert to be flung into our eyes by a wretched raïah. Frangi domous — the Franks are hogs, be they Russ or Gauls ; and the Greeks are dogs, and the fathers of dogs. He shall pay the karatch either with his hands or feet !”

“ Bashustun — on my head be it ;” said the selictar-aga ; and the Pasha smoked on with renewed vigour ; satisfied that the worthy functionary would keep his word.

“ Mazzouk ;” said the Pasha after a long pause ; “ your face is whitened ; you have charmed the ear of attention, and turned the sands of the hour-glass to gold. I knew that your arm was strong, but I have only learnt to-day that you can think as well as strike. I am weary of the tales told in my harem ; they are over-ripe pomegranates, and pall me. Have you no legend of war and strife, such as may make

me believe while I lie here upon my cushions, that I see the roving Tartar with his tall cap and slender lance; the hardy Scythian with his huge bow grasped like a toy; the Arab with his unerring djerrid; or the false Greek with his long spear gleaming in the sunshine, as he flies before the Allah hu! of the conquering Moslem? I want a tale like the neighing of a war-horse, or the blast of a trumpet; I love the far-off rumbling of warfare; and had I not been a Satrap, by the soul of my father! I would have been a warrior!"

At the conclusion of this noble and safe burst of pugnacious oratory, the Pasha resumed his chibouque almost fiercely; while he twirled his moustache, and looked defiance at the selictaraga; who, having respectfully pressed the hem of the great man's garment to his lips, stood for a moment buried in thought; and then, obeying the gracious gesture of the Pasha, seated himself on the edge of the carpet, and at once commenced his narrative.

CHAPTER XI.

“ I MUST transport my lord to the farthest East, that I may tell him that which he may not perchance have heard ; for, should I engage his ear with a tale of the wars of Roum, and of the glories of the conquering armies of the Padishah, the Descendant of the Prophet, and the Refuge of the World, should I not heap ashes upon my head, when my lord knows all things, and his servant is less than a dog before him ? ”

The Pasha drew in a long stream of the sweet-scented gebeli, and nodded his approbation ; while the selictar-aga, encouraged by the gesture, thus proceeded.

“ Half the world had bowed beneath the strong right arm of the wonderful Subuctagi

and his warlike son, the bright-eyed Mahmoud, when his grandson Musaoud ascended the royal steps of the throne of Ghizni. It was a moment of trial, for the brave Azim Schah Siljochi, the lord of the Toorkomans, had already subdued the kingdoms of Bokhara and Samarcand, reaping their harvest with the sword, and awakening their echoes with the clash of steel, and the thunder of prancing hoofs. He was born for battle ; the storm and the tempest rocked him to rest in his infancy ; he laughed as the red lightnings danced around him ; and chased the thunder-bolt when it fell ruin-laden into the valley. He breasted the waves when the wild sea was chafed into anger ; and leaped the precipices in whose depths death lay coiled like a serpent.

“ When his boyhood was spent, and that his upper lip was fringed with the beard of strength, he became only more bold and dauntless. The spear and the sword were dearer to him than the zebec or the hookah ; and the trumpet-blast sweeter than the voices of the awalis. His ambition was as a fiery torch which spread devastation before it ; and his name was the watchword of the warriors when they rushed upon the weapons of the foe.

“ Musaoud had not yet girded on the scymitar

of sovereignty when the warlike Azim pressed onward, even within the limits of his empire; and he no sooner became the right hand of power than he resolved to stem the torrent of invasion ere it reached the footstep of his throne; and, for this purpose, he called to him the noble Altasash, the brave viceroy of Charism, who had long panted to cross swords with the victorious Prince of the Toorkomans.

“ All Ghizni was convulsed with pride and admiration, when the eagle-browed Altasash galloped like a meteor towards the plain where his gallant army was assembled. His steel-clad warriors were counted by thousands; and one universal shout of welcome, which seemed to shake the astounded earth even to its centre, hailed him as he bounded forward with his son Kousruf by his side. - He was the idol of the people; and there stood not one among that closely-serried host, who would not have freely shed his blood for the brave and high-souled Altasash.

“ Mothers blest him as he passed, and held their infants high above their heads that they might look upon the hero; the aged wept that their strength was spent, and they could not follow him to battle; while they who had hi-

thereto resisted the temptation, flung down their peaceful tools, or instruments of sport, and grasping a ruder weapon, rushed to the ranks of battle.

“ Winter had already stretched his icy hand over the earth, but the gallant viceroy heeded not its pressure ; the enemy strode on ; and he disdained to yield before the perseverance of the conquering Azim. As the armed host swept forward, all was wretchedness before and about them ; the trees stretched forth their leafless arms towards a murky and leaden sky ; the winds howled through the valleys like savage monsters in search of prey ; the torrents, swollen with rain, leapt and roared as they escaped from their channel, and bore on their turbid waves, the wreck of many a stately tree torn from its roots, and hurled to ruin by the tempest ; fragments of rock, wrenched away by the storm-gusts, fell clattering into the defiles of the mountains ; and, at length, amid all this desolation the gaunt fiend Famine stalked through the camp, and shook his bony hand above the host. But the heroes of Ghizni defied him to the last ; the ardent Altasash met him as the rock meets the tempest ; and the troops, encouraged by his example, armed themselves with resolution, and cried

shame upon the craven who dared to murmur !
The mountain-path ——”

“ Mashallah !” interrupted the Pasha, with a most unequivocal yawn ; “ I have mistaken my taste ; I have already heard enough of this second Rustum :* let him rest in peace, whether he died of want or a keen steel, which is a fact that, thanks be to the Prophet, I know nothing about. The day is wearing, and the shadows are growing longer ; we will hasten the evening meal, and leave your heavy warriors to their mountain-path.”

The disconcerted sword-bearer did not venture to reply ; but silently motioning to the attendants, who were lying half asleep upon the turf at a distance, to approach and do their duty, he slowly followed the Pasha to the palace, with a clouded brow, and a most unenviable feeling of mortified vanity.

As they passed beneath the windows of the harem, the sweet voice of Katinka came upon the wind ; and the Satrap involuntarily stopped to listen. As the song proceeded, his eye lightened, and his lip quivered with pleasure ; and, when it ceased, he moved on, and without delaying a moment in his own apartment, at once

* A celebrated eastern hero.

beckoned to him his Aga Baba, and entered the harem.

The pensive Carimfil, as she rose to welcome him, smiled faintly, and then relapsed into her usual gloom ; but the young Greek girl turned on him a glance of fire that seemed to be reflected on his soul ; and her ready hand arranged his cushions, and her soft voice greeted him with a feeling not to be misunderstood.

Coffee was served, and the graceful Katinka was seated at the feet of her friend in respectful silence, when the Pasha, whose idleness required amusement, after graciously imparting to his fair listeners the recent failure of the selictaraga, turned towards her smilingly, and bade her put the sword-bearer to shame, by one of those tales which fell from her lips like wild honey from the trunk of the fig-tree.

The beautiful slave answered by meekly pressing her hands upon her bosom, and giving herself up to thought ; and as the Pasha looked upon her, he swore by his beard that she was more lovely than a houri, but as he did not put the vow into words, none were aware save Katinka herself that she was the subject of his reverie.

Slowly raising her head like a blossom that

has been bent with rain, after the lapse of a few moments the Greek girl prepared to speak ; and fixing her deep eyes on the Pasha, while she clasped one of the fair hands of his young wife within her own, she thus obeyed his bidding.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PASHA'S DAUGHTER.

THE Pasha Talāt was the Satrap of a powerful province too far removed from the magnificent City of the Three Seas, the capital of the Lord of Life, to be frequently convulsed by the factions which must ever rend the metropolis of a great Empire. His chaoushes knew no other lord, save by the voice of rumour ; they had never laid their foreheads in the dust before a greater than himself ; and they served him with the blind obedience which was their duty.

Every karabash* and astrologer of the province had predicted for him a long life and a prosperous fortune. His spahis† were alert and brave, and threw the djerid with all the art of

* Wise man.

† Horse soldiers.

Arabs ; his palace was the noblest in the city, and his kasr* the strongest in the mountains ; his mir-akhor † was justly proud of his unrivalled stud ; his yuzbashis‡ were faithful ; and the strange merchants who from time to time traded in the bazār, repaid with a willing and liberal hand the protection and justice which they ever found in the divan of Talāt Pasha.

But the Satrap possessed one gem which out-valued the diamonds of his treasury, and the revenue of his pashalik. His beard was already marbled with gray when the prayer of his heart was answered, and he became the father of a lovely girl. Pure as the blossoms of the Indian Agla, lovely as the bursting rose when it drinks in the dew-drop of the early dawn, and graceful as the fawn which sports by its mother's side beneath the forest boughs, Maïtap§ seemed to have come on earth to shew the world how fair the peris of Paradise may be. Her mother loved her as the bulbul loves the moonlight ; her father clung to her as to the principle of his existence ; and as years went by, and time only rendered her more faultless, the fame of her rare beauty was noised abroad ; and many a poet

* Castle. † Head-groom. ‡ Captains.
§ Moonlight.

rhymed the name of the Pasha's daughter to a thousand expletives of harmony and love.

Fathers sued for their sons, and mothers visited the harem of the Satrap to satisfy themselves that rumour had not outrun reality ; but the proposals of the one, and the scrutiny of the other alike availed nothing ; the Pasha loved his child too much to thwart her fancy ; and the glorious pearl of the province only wept when they talked to her of quitting her father's roof.

Among the numerous suitors whom her loveliness drew around the carpet of the Pasha, was the dark-eyed Youssouf Bey, the only son of a wealthy Satrap whose province adjoined that of the father of Maïtap. The country rang with his praises : he had read the Korān thrice through ; he had transcribed the poesies of Hafiz on the tablet of his memory ; while yet a youth he had mortally wounded an Arab Schiek in a skirmish whence older and stronger warriors had fled ; to the courage of a man he joined the softness of a woman ; and when the proud Pasha asked for him the hand of the Satrap Talāt's daughter, his heart was as free from any impression as the mysterious sea over which navies have passed without leaving a trace behind ; but unlike the illimitable ocean, that heart had never yet been

laid bare to any contact; and when the fair Maïtap was mentioned to him as his future bride, he listened in silence, and taught himself to love her in hearkening to the hyperbolical panegyrics of the strangers who visited the palace.

But his father's rank and his own merit availed him nothing. Presents both rare and costly were sent to the harem of Talât Pasha; his mother, anxious for his happiness, employed every wile in order to ensure success; the father of the young beauty expatiated on the advantages of the connection; and every female tongue in the city was loud in his praise; yet he met no happier fate than his less worthy rivals. The young beauty listened, wept, and finally refused to allow the name of Youssouf Bey to be mentioned in her presence.

Opportunities had not been wanting when she might have satisfied herself of his rare personal advantages, but she had avoided them; nor did she approach the lattices of her apartment until she ascertained that, hopeless of success, he had quitted the city.

The failure of the young and gallant Bey acted powerfully on the spirits of the other suitors of the lady; they felt that where he had gathered only ashes, they could secure no trea-

sure ; and one by one, slowly and reluctantly, they withdrew their claims.

Light was the heart of the fair Maïtap when the last hoof-stroke of the lover-band resounded through the court-yard, and the rider galloped away in search of a more willing bride ; and as she hung upon the neck of her father, and buried her sweet face in his bosom, she murmured gentle words of tenderness and trust that drew tears from the eyes of the Pasha, and blessings from his lips.

Less happy was the son of the Satrap Sarim ; no fear of failure had gone with him to the palace of Talat, and his rejection had fallen upon him like a stroke of destiny. From the hour that he lost hope, he felt that to live without the beautiful Maïtap would be impossible ; and as he sped homeward, he breathed an earnest and a solemn vow that he would win her, or die.

But how ?

Youssouf Bey was young and sanguine, full of life and love, rich, talented, and handsome. If ever hope brushed away a dark shadow from the tablet of despair with her sunny wing, it was for such as he !

Despite his love for his daughter, Talat Pasha could not conceal the feeling of disappointment

with which he saw the young Bey depart. He could hope no brighter fortune for her than that which she had just rejected ; and he was mortified also that the haughty suitor had not made a single effort to change the temper of the chilling beauty ; but had bowed beneath her decision without a word of remonstrance.

Time, however, which softens all things, gradually diminished the regret of the Pasha, and he forgot to sigh when the name of the Satrap Sarim was mentioned in his presence. Nor could he forbear rejoicing, when the labours of the divan were over, that the sweet smile of Maïtap still welcomed his arrival in the harem, and shed a ray of light over his existence ; and, eventually, he almost learned to rejoice that his lovely child was either colder or more capricious than the rest of her sex.

The usual quiet monotony of the Satrap's palace was one morning disturbed by the intelligence that a strange merchant had arrived in the city, and established himself in the principal khan, with an assortment of stuffs such as had never before been beheld in the province. One of the household slaves had lingered to see many of the bales opened, and gave a most exciting description of their contents, as well as of the Kha-

waji himself ; and the fair Maïtap, who had become wearied alike of her tusbee,* her birds, and her flowers, amid the languor of a warm day of summer, was not sorry to find a new source of amusement in the hyperbolical details of the voluble Saidè.

“ Mashallah ! ” pursued the slave, as she perceived that her beautiful young mistress was leaning forward upon her cushions to listen ; “ I never saw such silks, nor such eyes ! One of them worked with gold, in the cypher of the Padishah on a ground of bright orange ; and another of clear blue rayed with silver. And then such a beard ! as black and as glossy as a bird’s wing : and the most delicate muslins for yashmacs !† you might see the very colour of the lips they covered. And, wallah billah ! a voice that goes through and through you, as though it spoke to your soul rather than your ears. Ajaib — wonderful ! why he has brought into the city the lading of nine camels ; and he walks like a Vèzir.”

The fair Maïtap could not restrain her mirth, and clasping her little hands, she gave way to a hearty burst of graceful laughter. “ And how call you this wondrous trader, Saidè ? And

* Chaplet. † Veil.

whence comes he? From the coral caves of the deep sea, or the fleecy vapours of the blue sky? For such eyes, and beard, and tones as these can surely not belong to a mere mortal."

"Ne bilirim — what can I say?" replied the slave; "He seemed to me to be mortal, aye, and to feel like a man, for when Giadilla, the Kadenhahia,* of the Cadi's daughter, who was looking on while he was arranging his goods, declared that she should fall sick if she could not persuade her mistress to purchase for her a calemquer,† which marvellously struck her fancy, the young Khawaji folded it in an instant and placed it in her hand, with a smile as bright as the colours in which it was painted, though the astonished Kadenhahia told him that she had not a para in the world."

"Your merchant-prince is indeed a marvel;" smiled the young Hanoum; "but I would learn his name."

"They call him the Khawaji Zadig, and he comes from Bassora. Mashallah! what an eye he has, and a forehead like a Padishah! Giadilla was in luck to day; her kismet won a gift

* Nurse.

† Handkerchief worn on the head.

for her from the whitest and the softest hands in the world."

"Nay, you are mad, Saidè ;" said the fair Maïtap striving to call up a frown ; "One would think that no strange merchant had ever before visited the city, or rewarded the insolence of an idle nurse with a head-dress ; let me hear no more of this — it is unseemly."

The rebuked attendant bowed her head in silence, and shortly after quitted the apartment.

An unusual restlessness suddenly seized the Pasha's daughter ; she rose from the sofa ; thrust her delicate feet into her pearl-sprinkled slippers ; tried all her instruments one after the other, and rejected each in turn ; complained of an oppression in the air ; discovered that the water in her goblet was heated and sickly, and that the musk-lemons which were scattered over the room affected her head ; and finally quarrelled with the exquisite cachemire that was folded about her brow, and declared that, since she had looked into a mirror, she had never worn a colour that became her.

The inference was simple ; a new cachemire must be purchased ; and she had already examined and rejected every shawl in the bazar of the city, save those of the strange merchant.

She would dispatch a slave to bid the Khawaji send his choicest merchandise to the palace ; and yet, no — how could he divine her tastes ? He would probably retain the very thing she wanted, and she should be wearied by looking over a heap of uninteresting lumber. Truly, this was a dilemma. The bazar was at the other extremity of the city ; the streets were hot and close ; and the very wind seemed to have been fanning the sun, and to have carried away its warmth, for it fell on the brow like the pressure of a heated hand ; but should she delay until the cool hours, the light would fail, and she could no longer distinguish the colours of the web — Besides, some Emir's wife might carry off the very cache-mire that she coveted ; and this reflection was so alarming, that the fair Maïtap at once clapped her hands, and desired the slave who obeyed the summons, to order her araba, to bring her feridjhe* and yashmac, and to prepare her two principal attendants to accompany her to the bazar.

Having made these arrangements, the gentle girl subsided once more into composure ; resumed her tusbee, and passed its perfumed beads rapidly through her fingers, as she mur-

* Cloak.

mured out a love-ballad which by some extraordinary fatality just then recurred to her memory; and smiled once or twice as though some pleasant thought had grown with the melody. Her resolution was a holiday for the two favoured slaves who were to attend her, for curiosity had grown very powerfully in the harem since Saidè had told the tale of the good-fortune of the Cadi's Kadenhahia with the new Khawaji; and while some of the fair slaves dreamt of painted calemquers and embroidered silks, others were indulging visions of dark eyes, ruby lips, and tones of music.

The araba was soon ready, for Zobeidah and Shereen, the chosen pair who were to profit by the sudden whim of the young beauty, had urged the Arabadje* and the Serudjes† to their greatest speed; and Maïtap was still busily engaged in arranging, with more than her usual exactness, the transparent folds of the envious veil which was to shroud her loveliness, when the richly gilt and silken-curtained carriage rattled to the door. Four mounted negroes surrounded it; and ere long it was jolting along the rude pavement of the city streets.

* Coachman.

† Grooms.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PASHA'S DAUGHTER—*continued.*

THE Khan of Damascus, as the caravanserai was called, in which the Merchant had taken up his abode, was situated near the southern gate of the city, many stadia from the palace of the Pasha ; and more than once during her drive the heart of Maïtap beat more quickly than usual, as she asked herself why she thus indulged a caprice, as extraordinary as it was unaccountable. Frequently was she tempted to change her purpose, and simply to visit the bazar; but a resistless impulse urged her to persevere in her original intention ; and while this mental war was waging in her heart, the araba drove into the yard of the caravanserai.

In the centre of the court a handsome foun-

tain poured forth its volume of bright sparkling water ; and in one corner rose a small edifice dedicated to the sick birds brought by the hunters and peasants from the mountains. A pair of noble eagles, with their feathers ruffled by illness crouched heavily upon the roof ; a lame stork was visible through one of the casements ; and a number of small birds, of different descriptions, were perched on the eaves of the building.

But Maïtap saw neither fountain nor infirmary ; her eyes were fixed on a young man, who stood earnestly conversing with a spahi,* and whose extreme personal beauty exceeded any thing which she had previously imagined. As she lay back upon her cushions, with her feather-fan before her face, she could indulge her admiration without a fear of his observing her ; and this feeling of security betrayed her into a reverie which was only terminated by the harsh voice of the Aga Baba, who reining up his splendid Arabian close to her side, inquired her further pleasure.

“ Yavash, yavash — softly, softly ;” she said, starting at once into a full consciousness of the error into which she had been betrayed ; “ I have not yet quite decided whether I shall ven-

* Cavalry soldier.

ture to encounter the fatigue of bargaining with the khawjis to-day ; my head aches, and my eyes are heavy."

" We will then return at once to the palace ; " said the negro ; and he had already gathered up his bridle, when the lady exclaimed peevishly.

" And yet when I have submitted to the tediousness of traversing the city, I may as well profit by the exertion, or I shall be compelled to repeat it. Inquire, therefore, for the store of the merchant Zadig."

The Aga Baba obeyed ; and the araba slowly proceeded to the quarter indicated, Maïtap never once removing her eyes from the figure of the stranger, and marvelling much whom he could be. The slaves who sat at her feet detected the sudden preoccupation of their mistress with the intuitive penetration of the sex ; and although they uttered no comment, they glanced expressively at each other, and then indulged themselves in gazing on the same object, with an interest and admiration only inferior to her own.

When the carriage stopped at the entrance of the store, great was the satisfaction of the Pasha's daughter on remarking that the handsome stranger hurriedly terminated his conversation with the soldier, and turned his steps in the

same direction ; and the cloud which had gathered upon her brow was dissipated in an instant, when with a low and respectful salutation, he followed her into the spacious warehouse, and stood silently with downcast eyes, awaiting her commands.

This then was the Merchant Zadig !

For the first time the proud beauty felt ill at ease : she had forgotten why she came there, and what she sought ; and she remained earnestly gazing upon the khawaji, without making an effort to give even the semblance of accident to her visit.

The stranger was about five-and-twenty ; his eyes were as black as ebony, and as bright as sunbeams ; his port was haughty ; and his brow well became the pride that sat on his finely-moulded lips. He wore a turban of which the cachemire was almost above price ; his flowing robe was of crimson silk, rayed with orange ; and in his rich and well-adjusted girdle he carried a hand-jar sparkling with one immense ruby, on which was graven the cypher of the Prophet.

The silence became embarrassing ; and to dispel it, Shereen, the favourite attendant of the lady, took up a gorgeous shawl which was flung upon one of the bales, and began to utter

"Mashallahs!" and "Pek Guzels!"* innumerable, as she examined its pattern and texture. The impulse was as successful as it was inartificial, for it withdrew the eyes of Maïtap from the Merchant, and broke the spell that had been suddenly cast over her. Annoyed and mortified at her own folly, the Pasha's daughter at once assumed a haughtiness foreign to her natural character; and glancing round her, she said coldly :

"Khosh buldûk—you are well found, khawaji; my slaves tell me that you have cache-mires of price among your goods, which out-value any in the bazârs of the city. I may perchance become a purchaser; let me, therefore, at once see the most costly of your bales, if I have heard the truth."

"Alhemdullilah!" murmured the Merchant: "your highness does my poor store but too much honour; and I and all that I possess are at your command." After which courteous declaration, he clapped his hands, and a couple of Numidian slaves, clad in dark blue tunics, with scarlet turbans, instantly appeared from behind the screen which veiled an inner apartment. At a silent signal from their employer each

* Very pretty.

seized a corner of the tapestry curtain, and held it high above his head, while the Merchant in a low and respectful voice begged the lady to favour him by passing into the chamber where he had secured the most costly of his merchandise from the contact of casual purchasers.

Thralled, and governed by a curiosity which had now become uncontrollable, the stately Maïtap scarcely hesitated a moment; and followed by her two attendants, she crossed the threshold, and the screen fell behind her.

The apartment in which she stood was spacious, and lighted by three windows overlooking a court planted with maple and acacia trees; these windows the luxurious Merchant had veiled with curtains of pale pink silk that gave a sunset hue to every object in the chamber; but the surprise of the Pasha's daughter amounted to wonder, as the gorgeous Numidians, after glancing towards their master, spread over the handsome divan of crimson velvet, a covering of delicate white satin wrought with gold: and heaped upon it cushions of needle-work, such as even the loved and capricious Maïtap had never before beheld.

As the young beauty sank upon the glittering sofa, the Merchant still stood before her with

bent head, as though he dared not meet the eyes which rested on him; then slowly retiring, he indicated to his slaves the bale which was to be opened for her inspection; while, in order to while away the time, he spread out before her several caskets filled with gems, which flashed in the soft and shaded light. Tusbees of pearls, each the size of a pea; bodkins of brilliants; rings of rose diamonds, charms, and amulets, and gilded toys of every description, enough to turn the head of a score of Eastern women.

Amid all her admiration the fair daughter of the Pasha remarked, however, that there was one casket which the khawaji had not opened, and which, when he had once or twice accidentally taken it up, he had hastily laid aside. There needed no more to excite in her bosom a strong desire to examine the contents of the casket; and when the same circumstance again occurred, during a search which the Merchant was making for a case containing some valuable turquoises, she could not refrain from pointing towards the mysterious subject of her thoughts, and inquiring why that also had not been submitted to her inspection.

"Lady;" said the khawaji: "all that I have is at the bidding of your highness, and even un-

worthy of your attention. Of what is mine I would hold back nothing. Your slave lives but to obey you, and his face is whitened by your approbation ; but the contents of this casket are not mine ; I hold them only in trust for one of my most honoured customers ; and I would not lay before you a jewel of which I cannot make you mistress."

"But I would see it nevertheless ;" urged the fair Maïtap, as she extended her hand towards the Merchant.

Zadig bowed submissively, and having loosened the clasps of the casket, he laid at the feet of his visitor a superb hand-mirror, of which the frame was of chased gold, profusely studded with brilliants. A cypher of small emeralds ornamented the back of the glass, and a heavy tassel of gold depended from the handle ; and, altogether, the toy was of so costly a description that the Pasha's daughter could not restrain an exclamation of delight.

"Can you really not dispose of this pretty anali, Effendim ?" she asked eagerly.

"Alas ! I have told your highness only the truth. It was wrought in the bezenstein of Stamboul for a young and wealthy Bey, who is about to form his harem ; and is destined to reflect the

beauties of his fair bride. He has already urged its arrival more than once, and I dare not disappoint him."

" Y'Allah ! it is a pretty toy, and the Bey has taste. How call you him, khawaji ?"

" Youssouf Bey, the son of Sarim Pasha"—replied Zadig.

" By the soul of your father, you may then sell me the anali ;" said Maïtap, with a proud toss of her pretty head ; " for the bride will not put off her slippers in the harem of the Satrap's son before you have had time to make a dozen such."

" Asteferallah !" murmured the Merchant ; " Your highness must have been misinformed. The young Bey made a journey to the province of your noble father, (may his years be many !) and abode, as I have been informed, some days in the Pasha's palace ; and it was on his return thence that he learnt the happiness which was in store for him."

Maïtap blushed as she listened, until the roseate flush could be distinguished through the muslin of her yashmac ; and she suffered the splendid anali to fall from her hand upon the cushions. It was reverently raised by the khawaji, and replaced in the casket without a word

from the young beauty ; for a grasp like iron was on her heart. Had her pride indeed won for her no greater triumph than this ? Was she forgotten in a day ? replaced in a month ? remembered only with a smile ?

The reverie would have lasted longer, but chancing to look up, and meeting the fine dark eyes of the Merchant, Maïtap suddenly resumed her self-possession, and gave full employment both to his patience and his taste, in examining one after the other all the shawls in his warehouse.

It was a pretty scene. The lady reclined upon her cushions of party-coloured satin, with one white arm fully revealed as she extended it to touch the different shawls which were spread out before her by the handsome trader ; who, resting upon one knee on the edge of the carpet, took them from the hands of the Numidians who stood close behind him ; while the attendants of the lovely girl, shrouded in their dark and ample mantles, were seated a little space apart. The soft and dreamy light mellowed the atmosphere about them ; and the rainbow-like tints of the shawls which were scattered through the apartment, lent a gorgeous finish to the picture.

The sudden entrance of the Aga Baba gave a

new feature to the aspect of affairs. The lady held in her hand a magnificent cachemire of exquisite texture, and as the screen was lifted, she said suddenly :

“ It is well, Effendim ; tell me therefore the lowest price that you will take for this which I hold, and our bargain will soon be terminated.”

“ Sixteen purses :” replied Zadig coldly, and without raising his eyes ; “ and were it not that I am honoured by the notice of your highness, I should demand twenty.”

“ And this ?—” and she pointed to another of inferior quality ;

“ Will not count beyond nine ; though the wreath of nirgis* is woven by the hands of the peris.”

“ They are mine :” said Maitap, as she rose to depart ; and the Khawaji having folded them in two separate handkerchiefs of coloured muslin, intended as a present to the attendants, placed them in the hands of the Aga Baba, as the murmured “ Affiet ollah — much pleasure attend you,” of his fair visitor fell on his ear.

In another moment the araba rattled through the wide gate of the khan.

The Pasha's daughter never once spoke during

* Narcissus.

her homeward drive, but as she stopped at the door of the harem, she unfolded the shawls from their coverings, and flinging the painted handkerchiefs into the laps of her attendants, left the peri-woven shawl which had been her last purchase, in the hands of the Aga Baba when he assisted her to alight.

The negro looked up ; and while a broad smile displayed his large and glittering teeth, and his huge eyes were distended to their utmost size, he bent his head, and muttered something which passed for thanks.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PASHA'S DAUGHTER—*continued.*

FROM this day the nature of the beautiful Maïtap underwent a total change. She was restless, unhappy, and capricious. The very sun did not shine in the heavens for her as it had once done; her flowers had no fragrance, her birds no song. She drooped like a caged nightingale—she withered like a blighted rose. When her maidens strove to entertain and arouse her, it was no longer with light tales of love and laughter to which she had hitherto listened with a proud feeling of amused disdain, but with legends of fear, and sorrow, and despair; for then she wept sweet tears over the griefs of others until she soothed her own. Once only did she repeat her visit to the khan, and she

found a void. The merchant Zadig had left the city ; and there remained no trace of him in the caravanserai. Many were the tales told, however, of his liberality, his charity, his gracefulness of manner, and his warmth of heart ; and by some extraordinary fatality not one of them failed to reach the ears of the pensive beauty.

For hours did she sit calling up before her mental vision every word, and look, and action of the young Khawaji ; true, she had seen him but once, and yet, she felt that there was an expression in his deep eyes which had entered into her soul ; and then she remembered how soon and how easily the haughty son of Sarim Pasha had forgotten her, and she wondered within herself whether she should fade as early from the memory of the Merchant.

One day, when she was as usual indulging these speculations, a slave entered her apartment, and presented to her a small packet which had been brought to the city by the Emir-hadji of a caravan that had proceeded on its way at day-break. She opened it hastily, and having torn away the numerous coverings in which it was enveloped, unclasped a crimson casket, and started with surprise on discovering the well-known anali of the merchant Zadig. Upon the

mirror lay a strip of paper, containing simply these words: "For the beautiful and honorable lady, her highness Maïtap Hanoum, from the most devoted of her slaves."

The Pasha's daughter blushed until brow and bosom burnt with the crimson tide that rushed tumultuously from her heart. Her first impulse was to conceal the paper from the profaning eyes of her attendants; the next would probably have been dictated by her pride, and have compelled the restoration of the gorgeous gift; but she knew not where to find the donor; and as she gazed into the jewelled mirror, she thought that her face had never seemed so fair. Involuntarily she sighed, and glanced down upon the shawl which cinctured her waist; she had long ceased to wear any other; it was that which she had purchased of the handsome stranger; it covered the heart in which his image was enshrined.

The proud beauty was subdued. As she held the sparkling anali in her hand, she felt that all those whom she had wounded by her coldness were revenged. She loved! And whom? Not a high-born Bey, in whose harem she would have moved a queen; whose rank would have satisfied the ambition of her father, and the

hopes of all her family ; but a Khawaji, a trader ; whose soul was in his bales, and whose thoughts, instead of dwelling upon her, must be engrossed by the eager thirst of gain. And yet, the anali ! Had he forgotten her, or had he valued his gold above her smiles, would he have thus sought to win them ? But what availed the fact, pleasant though it was ? Alas ! they might never meet again ; and as this startling contingency forced itself upon the reason of the pensive girl, a large tear sullied the surface of the mirror, and a sigh heaved the shawl that bound her slight and fairy form.

Several weary months sped by ; new suitors presented themselves at the carpet of the Pasha ; new instances were made to the drooping Maitap ; but all were alike unheeded ; and the unhappy Satrap began to fear that Monker and Nakir* were hovering about his child, and that the golden lamp of her young existence would be extinguished.

Every species of diversion permitted in the harem was lavishly essayed ; dancing-girls performed their graceful feats, and singing-women pealed forth their love-ditties unheeded ; the massaldjhis became distasteful, the guests wear-

* Angels of Death.

some; and, at length, any further attempt to arouse the melancholy Maïtap from her languor was abandoned in despair, and she was left to dream and weep in peace.

Talāt Pasha had an inordinate taste for jewels; many a place was obtained, many a favour granted, many a cause, no longer doubtful, decided in the divan through the magical agency of these costly treasures. It was therefore with no small interest that he learnt the arrival of an aged Diamond-merchant in the city, with jewels such as had never before been looked upon in the bazārs of the province. His selictar-aga talked to him of the emerald-bilted handjars, the golden-scabbarded scymitars inlaid with precious stones, and the sword-belts worked with pearls; his cafèjhi-basha of the zarfs,* lipped with rubies, and chased with cunning workmanship; and his principal chok-hadar† of a mantle of fine European cloth, whose collar was a perfect galaxy of jewelled light; his codgea-bashi had an audience to decide on the tax which should be levied on the sale of the goods; and his Saraf‡ to learn whether he should raise a new contribution in the villages on the produce of the coming harvest.

* The stands in which the coffee-cups are placed.

† Cloak-bearer. ‡ Banker.

The curiosity of the Satrap was excited ; and a summons was sent to the Merchant, who, with ready obedience, presented himself at the palace of the Pashalic on the going-down of the sun, when the gates of the bazar are closed, attended by a couple of slaves bearing the most rare and costly of his merchandise.

His venerable appearance interested every one in his favour, and the gifts which he lavishly distributed to the chaoushes of the household tended to deepen the feeling. He was apparently of great age ; his eyebrows and beard were as white as the snows of Mount Ararat ; his tall figure drooped in the shoulders, like that of one on whom the weight of years pressed heavily ; but his step was firm though slow, and his dark eyes had a light in them, which told that the soul yielded not to the weakness of the body.

Many and profound were the prostrations with which he entered the apartment of the Pasha, who received him most graciously, and at once motioned him to display his treasures.

Rumour had not exaggerated their value or their beauty ; and the audience was prolonged to an unusual length, without any appearance of weariness on either part. The Satrap in-

quired the route of the caravan with which the Merchant had travelled, the appearance of the cities that he had passed, the country that he had traversed, and the tribes whom he had encountered ; while every interval was filled up in examining the jewels and weapons, and in commenting on their cost and workmanship.

The Pasha made several purchases, for the prices of the trader pleased him as much as his merchandise ; and when, at length, he received permission to depart, and that he had laid aside his cases, and delivered them to the care of his attendants, a chaoush of the household conducted him with much courtesy to the door, a politeness which he was not called upon to perform gratuitously ; and thus his “ Oghour-ola—Heaven speed you,” was very sincere, as the Khawaji stepped across the household.

The Pasha lost no time, when the Merchant had quitted him, in passing into the harem, in order to display to his daughter the jewelled toys of which he had just made the acquisition ; and, as she languidly received those which were destined for herself, and raised the hand of her fond father to her lips in acknowledgment of his indulgence, the Satrap, anxious to amuse her melancholy, commented on the noble port, and

liberal dealing of the strange Merchant. For a time she listened listlessly, but at length she became interested in the description of the Kha-waji and his merchandise; and she silently resolved to summon him on the morrow. She was weary of the monotony of the harem; and the examination of the glittering stores of the stranger promised at least an hour's amusement.

When the Satrap had retired, the fair girl dismissed her slaves, for the evening was spent; and flinging back the lattice of a casement which opened on the garden of the palace, she leant out to listen to the song of the night-bird, to inhale the perfume of the flowers, and to blend her sighs with the fall of the fountain, and the whispering of the wind among the leaves.

It was a glorious moonlight! The shadows lay long and dark, while the lines of silver that were traced upon the earth, looked like fairy-plans for some new and bright creation: fleecy-clouds at times floated over the graceful orb, and dimmed its beauty for a moment, as the gossamer veil of a young bride softens the loveliness which is but heightened by its partial eclipse. All around breathed tenderness and peace; and the tears that fell slowly on the cheek of Maïtap in that still hour, were devoid of bitterness. Her

pride slept ; she did not ask her heart to lay bare the mystery of its enthralment, but she yielded to the sweet sadness that stole over her—and again the spirits that she had stricken were revenged !

Daylight spread over the eastern heights, draping them in a mantle of sober gray, whose hem soon grew into a belt of sheeny gold ; gradually the sky brightened, and the flowers raised their heads, and wept their perfumed dew-tears on the earth ; the distant lowing of the cattle came on the wind ; the twittering birds gave music to the woods ; the basin of the palace-garden became a gilded mirror in which the purple lotus gazed till she became enamoured of her own beauty ; and then, like a discordant tone, jarring through the sweet harmony of nature, came the voice of man ; and once more the world awoke ; and life, with all its cares and fears, its jealousies and strife, renewed its struggle.

It was on a terrace, shaded by lime-trees, whose blossoms were vocal with bees, and gay with the graceful rose-laurel of Eurotas, that the Pasha's daughter received the Merchant. She was closely veiled, as were the slaves who attended her ; and the venerable Khawaji was conducted to her presence by the watchful Aga Baba.

The gray beard and reverend appearance of the stranger were not however calculated to alarm the jealous guardians of the Pasha's harem ; and accordingly the Aga Baba, who had already feasted his eyes on the glittering merchandise of the stranger, and received a back-shish* which perfectly satisfied all his ideas of expediency, soon wandered away among the trees, leaving the interview to the inspection of two of his subordinates : who, in their turn, plunged deeper into the shade ; and contenting themselves with remaining within sight of the fair groupe, soon bent their dark brows upon their breasts, and slept profoundly.

Jewel after jewel was looked upon, and laid aside ; toy after toy was examined, commented on, and replaced in its casket ; until at length the eye of the lady was attracted to a small case of crimson velvet embroidered in seed pearls ; which, with a singularity that at once reminded her of the young Merchant of the khan, he put aside as often as it met his hand.

“ And that pretty casket which you have not yet opened ;” she said gently ; “ what does it contain ? ”

“ It was brought hither by mistake, Effen-

* Present.

dim ;" replied the venerable khawaji ; " it is not a jewel ; it holds nothing which can interest your highness, or I should long ere this have laid it before you ; it is not an article of merchandise—in short, it is bosh—nothing."

" The case, at least, is prettily imagined ;" said the spoiled beauty, who had never learned to brook opposition ; " and somewhat costly for such poor contents. You will at least suffer me to examine the embroidery."

The Merchant looked embarrassed ; he lifted the casket as if to present it to the lady, but he made no effort to obey her wishes ; twice he appeared about to speak, and then checked himself as though he feared to give utterance to his thought ; and all this time the hand of the Pasha's haughty daughter was extended towards him.

" Ne bilirim—what can I say ?" he faltered at length ; " The casket is not mine ; it has come here by the power of my unlucky felech ;* I am responsible for its safe and secret delivery —and——"

" And you take me for an Aga of the Janissaries, ready to see treason in a diamond ; or for a codgea-bashi, eager to levy a tax on your

* Constellation.

merchandise, is it not so?" asked Maitap, half amused and half annoyed at this unusual opposition.

The gray bearded Khawaji bent low and deprecatingly before her.

"Janum sinindar—my soul is your's;" he said humbly; "my life and all that I possess are at the bidding of your highness: but I have led a long life of probity and scorn of evil; and I have pledged myself to the owner of this casket that no eye——"

"Enough, sir, enough:" interposed the lady haughtily; "I need no khodjè* to read me lessons of propriety and honour. The time passes; and the road hence to your khan is long and wearisome; I will not detain you here." And she waved her hand with the majesty of a Sultana who desires solitude.

"Dismiss me not thus, Effendim; not thus, by your soul!" exclaimed the Merchant imploringly: "Whose dog am I that I should dare to call a cloud to your bright young brow, and to light your eye with anger. Rather let me be forsaken for ever!" And as he spoke, he tendered the casket to the Pasha's daughter, with a fixed and earnest gaze that drove back the warm blood to her heart, she knew not wherefore.

* Tutor.

For a moment she hesitated whether she should condescend to avail herself of the extorted permission of a mere trader to examine the mysterious casket: she felt that she ought to refrain, and to reject his tardy concession; but her curiosity was more powerful than her pride; and averting her eyes that she might not encounter those of the stranger, beneath which she was conscious that she quailed, she took the case from his hand, and without allowing herself to deliberate for a moment, pressed back the clasps.

As the lid flew open a faint cry escaped her; and she riveted her gaze on the contents of the little casket with an eagerness that betrayed her emotion not only to her attendants, but to the Merchant also. Yet she cared not for this: she gave it no thought; she was unconscious that any eye was on her: she was under the influence of a sudden spell; and several moments passed ere with a deep blush, and a feeling at her heart which was strangely compounded of happiness and anguish, she roused herself sufficiently to ask in a tone which, while she intended that it should be cold, was only gentle:—

“ It is a fair portrait; whose may it be? If

indeed the daughter of Talât Pasha may be permitted such a question."

"Lady ;" said the Khawaji ; "Merhamet eylè bendènè—have pity on me ; I am withered by your frown. I will lay bare my heart before you that you may read it at your pleasure. The portrait which you hold in your hand is that of Youssouf Bey, the son of Sarim Pasha of the next province, and it resembles him as one—"

"Nay, nay ; you strive uselessly to deceive me ;" exclaimed Maïtap sternly ; "the turban is indeed that of a Bey, and the costume is rich and costly ; but the features are those of a Shawl-merchant at whose store I chanced to alight a few months since. He was called Zadig."

"I dare not gainsay your highness ;" gravely replied the Khawaji ; "it is possible that the face may resemble the man you mention, whose soul is brightened by your remembrance ; but I have told only the truth when I assure you, lady, that the portrait is that of Youssouf Bey, painted by a cunning Frank, and destined for the young bride, whom the noble Pasha (may his prosperity increase !) has just chosen for his son."

"Now, by the grave of your father! you have a false tongue :" exclaimed the maiden with a burst of sudden passion ; " for that same Merchant when he visited the city many months back, told some of my slaves that this Bey was even then about to take a wife, for whom he had purchased some idle toys that had attracted their notice. How then may your tale be true when it is so tardy ?"

"Neither the merchant Zadig nor myself have dared to prophane your ear with falsehood, Effendim ;" calmly rejoined the Khawaji ; "it is even as we have both stated. The Pasha has long been earnest that his high-born son should bring a bride into his harem ; and—and——"

"And what ?" urged Maïtap impatiently.

"May your slave perish if he offend you ;" said the Merchant ; "but it was rumoured in the province, where I chanced then to be sojourning, that the young Bey had yielded a willing and eager assent to his noble father's wishes when they pointed towards ——" And again the Khawaji paused.

"Speak !" murmured Maïtap with a slight accent of scorn.

"It was said," pursued the stranger ; "that the Pasha's hopes had fixed themselves on the

lovely daughter of the high-born Satrap Talāt,
the far-famed Maitap Hanoum——”

“ Who cared not to be bartered like a bale
of coveted merchandise, against the pride and
power of an unknown suitor ;” haughtily inter-
posed the lady. “ And what followed ? ”

“ The Bey returned to his province ;” con-
tinued the Merchant ; “ silent, gloomy, and
sad ? He spent his time principally in riding over
the country alone, with a rapidity and perse-
verance which exhausted his gallant Arab ; or
among the spahis of his father, who adored their
young commander with a devotion for which I
have no words ; he avoided the harem of his
mother, and the divan of his father ; he grew
dreamy, and misanthropical ; and he seemed to
endure existence rather than to enjoy it ; when
he was suddenly aroused from this unnatural
stupor by a renewal of the subject of his mar-
riage. He acquiesced, however, with an indif-
ference which proved that his heart was not in
the compact ; and the bride was chosen, and the
presents made, and the very day was named
when she was to be conducted to his harem ;
but then the torpid heart of the Bey aroused
itself, and he fled — fled like a delhibashi from
the city to the mountains—and the young cheek

of the maiden was wet with tears, and the lip of the mother trembled with reproach and wonder ; but the wretched young man did not re-appear for days, and he returned only to deepen the regret of his betrothed, for the worm of sickness was feasting on his brow, and dimming the lustre of his eye ; and it was vain to talk of love to one who seemed to have been stricken by Asraël."

" But the rose returned to his cheek, and the light to his eye, was it not so ?" eagerly murmured Maïtap, with her gaze riveted on the picture.

" Slowly, imperfectly :" replied the Khawaji : " Lady, it is not easy for the eagle who has once soared towards the sun to live contented beneath a lesser light. He is once more in the palace of his father ; once more in the harem of his mother ; listening to their entreaties, and prepared to fulfil the contract even at the expence of his happiness. He cannot give his heart to his young bride ; he has laid it at the feet of one who has rejected the offering ; and thus he searches the world for toys and trifles to fill the thoughts which might otherwise dwell upon his coldness."

" Toys and trifles :" echoed the fair girl un-

consciously, as she grasped the portrait more closely : and the Narousing herself, she asked timidly ; “ And is this really the resemblance of Youssouf Bey ?”

“ As like as the shadow of the blue heaven on the surface of a lake ;” replied the Khawaji : “ it wants but breath and words to be himself.”

“ And does he send her this when he loves her not ?” asked the maiden, rather communing with herself than addressing her companion ; “ Alas ! she will become as wretched as the golden gu-nech-tchichey* which follows the proud sun through the hot hours of day, regardless of its scorching beam, and unheeded by the object of her fond idolatry.”

The Khawaji listened in silence ! He felt that he was not required to comment on the soliloquy of the lady, and he was discreet enough to occupy himself most assiduously in the rearrangement of his merchandise. It was well that he did so ; for in a moment the proud beauty became conscious of her indiscretion, and hastily and haughtily turned her gaze upon the Merchant, as if to note the effect of her unguarded

* Sunflower.

exclamation ; and the feeling of relief was comparatively great with which she saw that he too had been preoccupied, and that her words had passed unheeded.

Again it was the Aga Baba who terminated the interview. His heavy step was heard upon the terrace path ; and with nervous eagerness the lady selected a few jewels, and began to bargain with the Merchant. The affair was soon terminated, for the Pasha's daughter made but a faint shew of resistance to the price demanded by the trader ; and it was not until he had departed that she perceived that in the hurry and excitement of the last few moments, he had left the portrait of the young Bey in her possession, and had carried away the empty casket.

Her first impulse was to forward it to the khan by one of the negroes of the harem ; but a reluctance to part from so striking a resemblance to the individual who had so long haunted her dreams, coupled with the interest flung over the picture itself by the romantic story of the suitor whom she had discarded, perhaps too hastily, tempted her to retain it for a few hours. The Merchant would doubtlessly discover his loss when he replaced his goods in the store at the caravanserai ; or, should he fail to do so, she

190 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

could restore it early on the morrow ; and while she mentally discussed the expediency of this arrangement, she slipped the picture into her girdle, and pillow'd it against her heart.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PASHA'S DAUGHTER—*continued.*

WHEN the young beauty awoke on the following morning, after a bewildering dream in which the son of Sarim Pasha had sold her a shawl that had the portrait of a grim and hideous negro hidden among its folds ; and Zadig the Merchant had seated a fair girl upon her carpet whom he told her was his bride ; she began to reproach herself for a weakness which it was no longer time to subdue ; and the blush of pride dried the tears of reluctance with which she enveloped the portrait of Youssouf Bey in a painted handkerchief, and dispatched it to the Khan of the Jewel-merchant by the hands of her favourite Shereen. But her resolution was formed too late, and her heart's best prayer was

granted when the confidential slave returned with the information that the strange Khawaji had left the city at daybreak with a caravan which chanced to be passing.

There was no remedy ; and the portrait of the handsome son of Sarim Pasha remained in possession of the Satrap's daughter. For a while the fair Maītap appeared to have drank at the fountain of a new existence : her voice once more awoke the echoes of the harem into music, and her graceful laugh pealed through the gilded chambers ; her step again became as the step of the chamois, and her eye as the beam of the young day when it breaks over the world.

But this spirit-joy endured not long ; and only a few weeks had passed when the Pasha's daughter fell into a deeper and a more hopeless melancholy than any beneath which she had yet bent. Nothing aroused her save an allusion to the Satrap Sarim or his family ; and though she never uttered the name of Youssouf Bey, her fair cheek flushed, and her dull eye lighted up as her maidens discussed in whispers the subject of his long-protracted marriage.

Eagerly did she welcome the wandering pilgrims, dervishes, and other holy men who passed through the city ; her purse was ever

open to their necessities ; and thus the palace of Talāt Pasha was besieged by all the idle hadjis* who visited the holy tomb of the Prophet, either in expiation of their own sins, or of those of their wealthy employers ; but vainly did the fair girl receive, and assist, these pious and needy wayfarers, for not one of them brought tidings of the Merchant Zadig.

Despairing, and fading slowly away like a sun-struck blossom, the melancholy Maïtap at length resigned herself to the solitary and unhappy fate which had been brought upon her by her own pride, and only prayed to die ; and in this frame of mind she sent to ask an interview with a celebrated Dervish, who for the last few weeks had established himself in a ruined tomb beyond the walls of the city.

Her request was refused, her summons was unheeded ; the holy man had taken up his abode in that place of death because he had done with the world, and the world with him ; the enjoyments and vanities of life were alike obnoxious to his love of solitude and peace ; and the refusal was even stern with which he answered the entreaty of the sinking girl.

This unexpected difficulty augmented the de-

* Pilgrims.

sire of the maiden to converse with the ascetic recluse ; and when a second invitation had met with a like repulse to the first, she told the tale of her disappointment to the Pasha with many and bitter tears ; and early on the morrow the unyielding Dervish was commanded to present himself at the palace of the Satrap.

As the day broke a couple of chaoushes passed the gate of the city, and bent their steps towards the ruined tomb in order to compel the attendance of the Dervish, should he still refuse obedience : but the caution was unnecessary, for as they approached the building, the tall figure of the recluse, looking dark and solemn in the cold gray light, appeared at the portal of his inhospitable dwelling, and slowly moved towards them.

A courteous “ Khosh buldûk—You are well-found ; ” from the functionaries of the Pasha was answered by the cold “ Khosh geldin— You are welcome ” of the stranger ; who stalked along in the direction of the city without turning a second glance on his attendants.

The Dervish was a man of middle age, whose dark piercing eyes were overshadowed by thick and hanging brows ; and whose upper lip was hidden by a mass of coal-black hair which co-

vered his chin, and fell in long and wavy curls below his girdle. His khirkheh* was of coarse and heavy cloth, and his head-dress drawn deep upon his forehead; his step was firm and lofty, like that of one who had declined all further struggle with the world rather from disdain than fear; and there was an air of self-centered haughtiness in his whole manner and appearance which won for him an involuntary respect to which his lack of years did not entitle him.

He was received by the Pasha with indignant coldness, for all the father had been aroused within him by the uncompromising fanaticism of the devotee; and yet the noble bearing of the Dervish asserted its power even over the chafed temper of the Satrap; and he soon found himself, he knew not how, rather seeking to conciliate than to reproach. There was a spell also in his rich deep voice, which, even in the few words that he reluctantly uttered, had a strange effect upon the Pasha—It was like a note of long-forgotten music—it awoke pleasant but untangible memories; and bewildered the spirit while it charmed the ear.

After a brief interview with his host, the

* Large dark cloak.

Dervish was conducted by the Aga Baba to a garden pavilion whence the languid eye of the fair Maïtap loved to wander over the fairy wonders of the blossom-laden parterres ; and where her pale brow was fanned by the perfumed breeze, which came to it freighted with the spoils of the orange-flower and the jasmin. She had been prepared for his visit, and had cast over her head a long veil of delicate white muslin which fell like a cloud about her, and made her beauty almost spectral ; about her neck hung a string of precious pearls, from which was suspended a treasure to her still more precious, the portrait of Youssouf Bey ; or, as to her it ever seemed, of the young merchant Zadig, which was hidden beneath the folds of her robe, whose tint was of the softest blue that ever spread its azure over the vault of heaven.

As the recluse reached the threshold of the pavilion, he stumbled, and would have fallen, had not the ready hand of the Aga Baba grasped his arm ; but recovering himself in an instant, he bent before the lady with silent and deep respect ; and then tardily, and as it seemed, reluctantly, obeyed her bidding ; and advanced to the centre of the floor.

“ Holy Dervish ;” commenced the Pasha’s

daughter in a low faint murmur ; “ Forgive me if I have disturbed your solitude : I am unworthy to intrude upon your thoughts, or to entreat your prayers — and yet, if to solace a breaking heart, and to gladden the poor remnant of a life which is fast ebbing away, be a work fitted to your piety, you will not grudge me the few hours of communion which I have been eager to ensure. Allah *buyûk der*—the angels of death are hovering over me, and the light of my lamp is well nigh extinguished ! Will you not speak peace to my soul ere it is called to the giddy bridge of Al Sirat ? Will you not——”

“ What my poor prayers may effect shall be freely given, lady ;” slowly replied the Dervish : “ even now I will ask peace for you.” And waving his hand as if to deprecate all further parley, he turned his face towards Mecca, and sank upon his knees.

The maiden looked on him as he knelt with a feeling of deep and solemn interest ; the slaves withdrew to a small inner apartment at a signal from their mistress ; and the Aga Baba, to whom the scene afforded no amusement, and whose cupidity was not awakened by the poverty of a poor Dervish, while his vigilance appeared to be to the full as unnecessary as his atten-

dance, quietly walked away to terminate an unfinished party of tric trac* with one of the chaoushes, on which depended a case of sweat-meats presented to the attendants of the Pasha by a departing guest.

The prayer of the Dervish was probably fervent, but it was short; for the deep stillness amid which he could distinctly hear the painful breathing of the maiden had not endured many instants, when he rose from his humble posture only to assume one equally reverential at the feet of the gentle girl, the edge of whose veil he pressed to his lips with all the devotion of a hadji at the Prophet's shrine.

" You are too young to die, lady;" he whispered, in a tone as low and gentle as her own; " The bright world, with all its buds and blossoms, its sunshine, and its bliss, was made for such as you. The grave is for the gray head and the worn spirit—despair is for the wretched and the desolate—you should be the child of laughter and of hope. Life has yet much to charm one so fair as you are."

" Bir chey yok—there is nothing :" replied the maiden sadly: " I ask only for peace—for

* Backgammon.

forgetfulness; and I shall find them in the grave."

"Forgetfulness!" echoed the Dervish; "And what thought can have been traced upon the lily-leaves of a mind so bright and beautiful as your's, so dark as to make memory a blot? Y'Allah! were every mortal spirit but as pure, the wezn of the Prophet had been an idle toy."

Maitap listened in wonder! The austere devotee instead of threatenings was shedding sunshine over her soul; and she would not interrupt him by a word.

"Had such been possible;" pursued the Dervish, in one of those deep whispers which are the very voice of passionate tenderness from the lips that are dear to us, but which are merely music when murmured by a stranger to whom no chord of our heart responds: "Had such been possible I should have said that your sickness was of the spirit; that the sosun* had a canker hidden beneath its leaves; but this cannot be—the beautiful daughter of a powerful Pasha can never sigh away her youth in disappointment"—and he paused, and looked so earnestly upon her, that the crimson flush which spread over her brow and bosom was visible through her

* Lily.

veil. “ It cannot be — or, alas ! I should have deemed that your malady was the same as that of one who is dear to me as a brother, the unhappy Youssouf Bey, who loved you, lady, as he loved the bright heaven above him—as something hallowed — something holy — who would have poured out his best blood before you, if so he could have won one smile — one word from your sweet lips — who would do so still, even for a lighter boon.”

The maiden gasped for breath ; “ He must not — he dare not — he would break the heart of his young bride, who has loved him, and trusted in him.”

“ No bride will ever tread his harem-floor, if she come not from beneath the roof of Talât Pasha ;” said the Dervish hastily and earnestly ; “ He has sworn by the soul of his father, and by the grave of his mother, that he will win no other.”

“ Oh, say not so ! ” exclaimed Maïtap, passionately pressing her clasped hands upon her heart, as she remembered the Merchant Zadig ; “ Oh, say not so ! He is vowed to a gentle girl who would wither beneath his coldness ; and her misery would be my work. Bid him wed her, love her, cling to her through every change of fortune, and make for himself a happiness which

I shall never know on earth." And as she uttered the last words in a low murmur that could scarcely be heard at the extremity of the apartment, her head sank on her breast, and a large drop stole unbidden to her eye.

" You love another then !" said the Dervish ; " and Youssouf Bey is sacrificed ! Yet pause, lady, ere you reject a heart that lives in you——or — answer me"—he pursued in a clear whisper, as again he gazed fixedly on the astonished girl : " tell me as you value your hope of paradise, do you remember Zadig the Shawl-merchant whom you once visited at the Khan of Damascus ? Deceive me not, for your fate is bound up in your reply—Ha ! it is so !——" And he averted his eyes as the fair girl covered her burning face with her hands, and burst into tears ; while a strange expression of wild delight flashed over his features.

" Who are you ?" gasped out the bewildered Maïtap : " You, who have dared to call up a vision before me which I have almost sacrificed my life to banish ? Speak !" she repeated passionately, as she half rose from the sofa, and prepared to recall her attendants.

" One moment, lady, and but one ;" urged the Dervish, as he grasped her arm ; " before

you call down ruin upon me. A less violent revenge is in your power, where you may yourself immolate the victim—the weapon of a hireling would be useless, absence will kill sooner than steel. I perilled my life to look on you once more, but I perilled it cheerfully; for—I am Zadig the Shawl-merchant ——”

“Zadig!” echoed the maiden as she bent forward, and gazed with all her soul’s deep tenderness in her eyes upon the disguised Khawaji; “Zadig—do I not dream?”

“ ’Tis even I, sweet lady—then drive me not from your presence only to expire with anguish—have pity on my love, on my devotion—let me dedicate to you a life that would be worthless without the hope of your affection—tell me only that my boldness is forgiven. Let it not be deemed a crime that I have sought to save myself from wretchedness, when even force was used to compel me to a step against which my reason and my respect alike revolted.”

“Have you forgotten, Effendim;” asked the Pasha’s daughter, in as cold and stern a tone as her struggling affection would permit her to assume; “Have you forgotten that the step is a long one from the khan to the palace? Inshallah! I am no prize for the first pilgrim-mer-

chant who chances to deem himself a fitting match for the Satrap's only child."

"I am rebuked, lady;" said the young man sadly; "and I will intrude my memory no more upon you, I go only to die; and if I did not before expire beneath the lustre of your eyes, it was because I thought I read a light in them that bade me live. But in my blind presumption I have deceived myself; and the penalty of my folly shall be paid."

"Hold, madman!" almost shrieked the maiden, grasping his heavy cloak as he rose slowly from his knee; "I have much to ask of you, and something to thank you for. And first—how come you in this garb? And why did you disappear so suddenly from the city, only to return thus?"

"Most gracious lady;" murmured the deep rich voice; "the unhappy Zadig spread out his jewels before you, and left in your hands the portrait of the Pasha Sarim's son only a few months back; and he hoped in his infatuated passion, that even despite his grey beard and his bent figure you might have recognized him: but his presumption was keenly punished; he only drank in a deadlier poison by gazing on you for a moment, and encreased his despair

until he sank beneath it. What then remained to him? Nothing, save the khirkheh of a Dervish, and the hope of looking on you from a distance as you passed along the city streets—it was little for one who loved like Zadig, but it was all for which he cared to live—and, lady, I am here."

"And you were then the Jewel-merchant—and you know all my weakness!" exclaimed the maiden with a fresh burst of tears; "but words are idle, Zadig—the Pasha may break his daughter's heart, but he will never give her to a Khawaji."

"Yet will I not complain, Light of the World!" whispered the young man, as he rose to his knee, and possessed himself of the hand of the bewildered girl; "even although I am not the Zadig whom your pure spirit had enshrined in its calm depths, and who has called forth those precious drops of tenderness. I am indeed he whom you visited at the Khan—he who dared to forward to you a toy which was intended to recal his memory—he who cheated you with a gray head and a faltering tongue into looking upon his likeness—he, in short, who kneels before you in the garb of holiness and self-denial—and whom you once rejected as unworthy of

your love—I am Youssouf, the son of Sarim Pasha."

A faint shriek escaped the lips of the maiden, and she hastily drew the portrait from her bosom, and glanced from the ivory to her suitor, and from him back upon the picture; and as, despite his disguise, she indeed recognized its original in the kneeling figure beside her, she suffered the portrait to fall from her hand, which was instantly pressed to the lips and brow of the young Bey.

"It is enough;" he whispered; "and I am forgiven. The past is nothing, the present is your presence, the future is the hope of your affection. Light has again broke upon the soul of one whose spirit had long been dark. One word, houri of my heart's paradise! but one, and I am your slave for ever!"

"Ne bilirim—what can I say?" murmured the fair Maitap, as her head drooped upon the shoulder of her lover: "All shall be even as my lord wills. I am the gunech-tchichey,* and he is the sun—where he moves I follow—he is my life, and my light—my eyes and my soul are but his shadows."

The Dervish shortly afterwards quitted the

* Sunflower.

harem of Talāt Pasha ; and with him fled all the gloom and tears of the gentle Maïtap ; nor did many weeks elapse ere Youssouf Bey again appeared in the city as the suitor of the Satrap's daughter, and this time he did not sue in vain ; while none save he and his fair bride, (from whom I had the tale) ever dreamt that the presence of the pious Dervish in the garden-pavilion, had any share in influencing a marriage which spread joy and hilarity throughout two provinces.

PART III.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ DEOVLETIN isliat — May you encrease in prosperity !” said the Pasha, as the Greek girl concluded her tale ; “ Your Maitap is well worthy of attention ; though W’Allah ! it was unseemly in a Satrap’s daughter to bend her thoughts on a mere Khawaji.”

“ Oh, say not so !” tenderly exclaimed the lovely slave : “ Who can controul the heart ? The ocean-waves are not bound even by bands of iron : the sands of the desart cannot be steadied when the simoom is abroad, even by the foundations of a city ; how then can the affections be controuled or guided ? The wild steed upon the mountain spurns the bit, and the free spirit brooks no controul.” And without

waiting a reply, she burst at once into a gush of song whose melody swept through the chamber.

Oh! the heart is a free and a fetterless thing,
 A wave of the ocean ! a bird on the wing !
 A riderless steed o'er the desert-plain bounding,
 A peal of the storm o'er the valley resounding :
 It spurns at all bonds, and it mocks the decree
 Of the world and its proud ones, and dares to be free !

Oh! the heart may be tamed by a smile or a tone
 From the lip and the eye of a beautiful one :
 But the frown and the force with its impulse contending,
 Ever find it as adamant, cold and unbending ;
 It may break, it may burst, but its tyrants will see
 That even in ruin it dares to be free !

“ Nevertheless :” persisted the Pasha ; “ no woman has a right to say, ‘ mail oldum,’* and to pine away without the permission of her father. With a man it is otherwise ; he is the lord of himself, and is accountable to no one ; but a woman’s beauty is her best dowry, and obedience her first duty.”

The fair Carimfil sighed, and the Greek girl smiled : one mourned the thrall of her own spirit, and the other scoffed at the idle self-sufficiency of the pampered Pasha.

“ Shekier Allah ! ” continued the Satrap ; “ our women seldom think for themselves ; and thus when they venture to do so, they become

* I have fallen in love.

the subject of a tale. But what is written, is written ; and we will talk no more of this self-willed young houri. At sunset the almè will be here ; and my friend the Tchorladji tells me that they are as fair as the daughters of Peristan. You will love to look on them, janum — my soul ;” he said, in a softer tone, turning towards the languid Carimfil, while he glanced at the dark eyed Katinka ; “ and I am assured that they have among them a massaldjhe who is a world’s wonder. Bakalum — we shall see — I doubt much whether she will excel our own sprightly Greek.”

“ No, no ;” said the beautiful Circassian ; “ there is no tongue which makes music like that of my beloved Katinka ; she is the bulbul of the harem, the rose of the garden, the diamond of the mine—she is my eyes, and my life.”

“ And I ?” — asked the Satrap, with a slight tone of asperity.

“ What shall I say ?” answered Carimfil, as she bowed her fair head upon her bosom ; “ you are my lord, and my master. I think of you as the hadji thinks of the holy caba ;* you are the Korān of my faith, but she is the poetry of my existence.”

* The Temple of Mecca.

"Chok taticin — you are very gracious ;" smiled Katinka ; " I ask only to be the sister of your soul." And she looked expressively at the Satrap's bride, whose cheek and brow flushed with conscious crimson ; " but these almè — I dread them ; they will rob me of your smiles ; and should they be indeed as fair as they are painted, perhaps of your love also." And her glance wandered from the lady to the Satrap.

" W'Allah ! there is little danger ;" said the Pasha, returning the gaze with interest. " The almè ! what are they ? Ey vah ! — are they not bosh — nothing ; wandering from house to house, with light smiles and uncovered faces ?— Haivan der — they are animals ; and though they may be as fair as houris, they have eaten too much dirt to be remembered when they have received their backshish, and passed out of the harem."

" Alhemdullilah !" murmured Katinka, in a low tone, which reached only the ear for which it was intended, that of the sententious Satrap ; " Let them come then, for the echoes of the harem have not of late been awakened by the sounds of mirth. I am often sad myself ;" and she passed her hand across her brow with a pretty affectation of languor, which well became

the expression of her noble features ; " though perchance I should chide my own heart for its weakness."

" Hai, hai—true, true, you should be gay ;" said the Pasha, nodding his head significantly : " you are surrounded by flowers, and fountains, and music, and you should be gay."

The Greek girl seized her zebec, and swept her hand across it, as though smitten by a sudden pang : the chords vibrated for an instant from the violence of the contact, and then trembled into silence, as the sweet voice of the musician fell softly and sadly upon the ears of her listeners.

Bright and blue is the summer sky ;
 And 'tis sweet 'neath the clustering boughs to lie,
 And to watch the light vapours as they glance
 Like fairy dreams o'er the pure expanse ;
 But oh ! in those hours of calm delight,
 When the world and its cares are forgotten quite,
 That the charm may be a perfect one,
 We must not watch alone !

Wild and stern is the tempest hour,
 When the storm-god rides in his car of power,
 When the winds make vocal the ocean caves,
 And death rides throned on the crested waves ;
 And oh ! if we would defy the shock
 Of the billowy sea on the caverned rock ;
 And yield to our fate without a groan,
 We must not die alone !

212 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

Calm is the sunset's golden spell,
As it steeps in splendour each wood and fell,
Flinging wreaths of gems over leaves and flowers.
And painting the starry jasmine bowers :
But vainly its glory floods the sky,
If only one turn an upraised eye
To mark the bright vision ere 'tis flown ;—
For life's loveliest things
Droop their fainting wings,
When we look on them alone !

The song of Katinka saddened the Pasha's wife ; but the Pasha himself, for whom it was especially intended, was quite unconscious of its sentiment ; and merely remarking that the air was dull and monotonous, and that sometimes solitude was preferable to society, he intimated his intention to return to the salemiek,* to make his evening meal, and to enjoy his evening slumber before the arrival of the almè ; a resolution which he shortly afterwards carried into effect, to the great satisfaction of the fair inmates of the harem.

* Men's apartments.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT the set of sun Nevrestè and her fair band stood on the threshold of the Pasha's palace. Maniolopolò and the graceful Mherpirwir walked side by side, and both were absorbed in thought. The dancing-girl neither wept nor sighed, though she knew that the roof beneath which she stood covered the idol of a heart that she would have died to secure ; but she gazed despairingly on the young Greek through her veil, as though in that long look she would have concentrated her whole existence. The emotion of Maniolopolò was of a more mixed and less devoted character ; his pulses bounded indeed, as he remembered that he should ere long behold his gentle Carimfil : the first dream of his manhood,

the brightest vision of his spirit ; but blent with love for her, came fears for his own safety—fears which made his lip quiver, and his brain burn.

It was perhaps fortunate for him that his reflections tended to subdue his passionate impatience ; for the Aga Baba, who detested every incursion on his master's harem as piously as any jealous Moslem could desire, turned a searching, and by no means loving eye, upon each of the almè as they passed him ; and assuredly the uncertain and timid step of the young Greek subjected him to no suspicion.

A tedious hour was passed by the band in an anti-room, through which the negroes of the household came and went on their different missions ; while a few idlers grouped themselves about the strangers, admiring their dresses, and asking a thousand questions, which were answered by Nevrestè with a tact that would not have disgraced a diplomatist.

But at length the expected summons arrived, and the dancing-girls were conducted through a long gallery to the inner door of the harem ; where, prostrating themselves to the earth, they awaited the order of the lady to advance into the apartment. They were a lovely groupe ; with their flowing veils, long tresses, and picturesque

costumes ; their white arms gleaming like sea-foam, and their dark eyes flashing out like meteors ; and for the first moment the Pasha's wife was silent with admiration ; but the transitory surprise once over she received them gently and graciously, and bade them approach without fear.

As Nevrestè led them on in obedience to the command of the fair Circassian, Maniolopolo ventured for the first time to glance in the direction of the sweet and well-known voice. Carimfil Hanoum was seated on the edge of a gorgeous sofa, glittering with gold fringe, and gay with embroidery ; and at her feet reclined his beautiful sister pillow'd upon a pile of cushions. The Pasha was enthroned on the gorgeous divan ; his chibouque between his lips, his jewelled hand loosely grasping its slender tube, and his half-closed eyes giving assurance of the tranquillity or apathy of his spirit. Behind him stood two negroes, richly clad, with turbans and girdles of cachemire of the richest dyes ; while the female slaves of the harem were clustered together at the extremity of the apartment, which was brightly lighted up by a number of tapers, arranged on small tables of inlaid wood in different parts of the saloon.

The centre of the floor was vacant ; and there the dancing-girls at once took their stand, and grouped themselves in the most graceful and picturesque attitudes. Three of the number knelt upon the carpet with their six-stringed zebecs on their knees ; the remainder stood around them, some with their chapletted heads flung back, and their white arms raised high in air, while the silver bells of their tambourines rang out like fairy-chimes : others bending lightly forward, with one foot barely touching the floor, in the attitude of listening, like the nymphs of Diana on the doubtful track of some light-hoofed fawn : and others again, languidly supporting each other in a sweet repose, such as the houris enjoy in the rose-blooming bowers of Paradise.

“ Mashallah !” murmured the Pasha beneath his breath : “ 'tis a vision of Corkam !* They are like the stars of a summer night, the one lovelier than the other ; and, all together, enough to light up a world. Alhemdullilah ! Mahomet was a great prophet !”

This reverie was interrupted by the sudden pealing out of the voices and instruments of the

* Paradise.

dancing-girls, as a dozen of the band, led by the beautiful Mherpirwir, commenced their intricate and graceful evolutions. The dance told a tale of love ; there was the swift pursuit, the reluctant flight, the earnest supplication, the timid dissent, the impassioned eagerness, the yielding affection ; and as the last twirl of the tambourines made the air vocal, all the band were kneeling at the feet of their high priestess, the gentle Mherpirwir, holding towards her the lotus-wreaths with which they had been crowned.

"Aferin, aferin—well done, well done!" exclaimed the Satrap, startled out of his apathy by the enchanting spectacle : "Abdool, fill them each a feljane * of sherbet; for, by the soul of my father! they are peris—I have said it."

The negro obeyed ; and as each fair girl bent her head to the Satrap, and touched the christal goblet with her lips, the eyes of Maniolopolio and his sister met in a long gaze which revealed their secret. For a moment Katinka trembled, but her's was not a soul to shake at shadows ; and she recovered herself before the flush had faded from her brow, sufficiently to remark that her brother looked gloriously handsome in his disguise, and that the attention of the unsus-

* Cup.

pecting and less observant Carimfil might be safely drawn to him without a risk of his discovery ; a circumstance which would enable her to arouse in their subsequent conversations a thousand tender memories that would blend most happily with the vision of the dark-browed awali of the almè.

Her resolution formed, she looked up towards her beautiful friend, who bent over her to catch the words which she felt were hovering on her lips, and softly whispered : “ Look at the girl in the centre of the group — she with the willow waist, and gazelle eyes—by the instrument in her hand she must be an awali — saw you ever such a face ? The rest of the band are as faded lilies beside her !”

The Pasha’s wife glanced towards the disguised Sèidika as she had been desired ; and by a strange coincidence, at that very moment, so did the Pasha also. The wife looked long and earnestly, for there was an expression in the dark wild eyes of the singing-girl which strangely moved her, though she could not account for the emotion that they excited : and the husband did so likewise, from a feeling of admiration as intense as it was involuntary.

Maniopolopo was attired in a robe of deep

crimson, over which floated a light veil of the most delicate azure ; clusters of sweet-scented flowers, among which the tube-rose and the hyacinth were conspicuous, hung loosely in his hair, and rested upon his cheeks. His ample schalvar, (or trowsers) of tissue, concealed his feet ; and on his knees he supported the gaily-inlaid instrument with which he was accustomed to accompany his ballads. Beside him lay a tambourine, and in his girdle he carried a tusbee of orange-wood, and an embroidered handkerchief.

The difficulty of his position rendered him cautious ; and thus his bent head and downcast eyes were as gentle and feminine as his costume.

The Pasha was by no means an amateur of music, and he had lately learnt to love it only from the lips of Katinka ; he listened, therefore, rather from courtesy than inclination to the love-ditty, which, at the bidding of Nevrestè, the disguised Sëidika murmured out in a low and tender tone, that called tears to the eyes of the women ; and when the song ceased, it was matter of indifference to the fair Carimfil how the exhibition proceeded, for her spirit was in tumult, and she knew that her lover was before her.

As he first prepared to obey his task-mistress, Maniolopolo, bending low over his zebec, trifled for a moment among its strings ; and softly commenced :—

“ I’ve heard of isles beyond the sea,
Where summer neither fails nor fades — ”

then suddenly shaking his head mournfully, like one who dares not recall a long-forgotten strain, he struck at once into a Persian love-song which diverted the attention of his listeners, and enabled the trembling Circassian to recover her self-possession.

“ Pek ahi, Pek ahi—very well, very well,” said Saïfula Pasha, as the song ceased ; “ It is not bad ; but we have a bulbul in our own harem, who has a sweeter note. Take the zebec, Bèyaz ;” he added, glancing down upon the Greek girl ; “ and we will show this pensive awali the music of our distant province.”

Katinka took up her instrument with affected reluctance ; and measured the dancing-girls with her proud eye, as if to imply that she felt degraded by being compelled to exhibit her talent by their company ; and then, meekly bowing her obedience to the Satrap, she turned

a long look upon her adventurous brother, and commenced her song.

Where is my loved one? Oh, whisper me where—
 At the end of the earth ? I will seek for her there—
 Is she throned on a gem in some jewel-lit cave?
 Does she ride on the foam of some snow-crested wave—
 Does she float like a cloud through the regions of air?
 My soul and my spirit will follow her there!

Oh ! the globe is too narrow to hide what we love—
 And the billow below, and the vapour above ;
 For the heart is a guide that ne'er faints on the way,
 That cares not to slumber, and asks not to stay—
 Let the worshipped one dwell in earth, ocean, or air ;
 The spirit that loves her, will follow her there !

“Chok chay,” smiled the Pasha, as the fair slave boldly looked towards him for applause : “that is much — and well enough to sing to a zebec in an hour of idleness ; but Alhemdullilah ! it is mere poetry and madness. Now, tell me, mother :” he continued addressing Nevrestè : “have you not a Massaldji in your troop ? The Tchorbadji Effendi talked to me of a maiden whose subtle tongue could enchain the ear of attention, and charm the mind into forgetfulness. Let her speak—but, Bashustun ! I will have no more mawkish sentiment — let there be some kief* in the tale, or it will set me to sleep.”

* Cheerfulness.

"Wallah billah, your highness shall be obeyed ;" said the old woman ; " Speak, Sëidika —my lord listens."

"Shall I talk to the noble Satrap of love, when he cares not to hear it named ?" said Maniolopollo gravely ; " Asteferallah—heaven forbid ! It is a threadbare subject which may well be cast away like a tattered garment ; every one has worn it once, but it seldom sits comfortably ; and thus it gets flung from one to the other until it is known to all, and little cared for by any — some think, indeed, that they wear it, when they have folded themselves in a tunic of quite another fashion ; but as they seldom discover the cheat which they have put upon their own shoulders, they walk the bazars as erect in their motley, as though it were true cloth of gold. I will, however, since my lord sees fit, at once change the subject ; and relate to him the Adventures of the Barber of Bassora."

"Inshallah ! at last we shall hear something worth listening to ;" said the Satrap : "I like the title of the tale vastly : it smacks of every-day life ; tchapouk, tchapouk, quick, quick — let the calam of memory move rapidly, and you shall have no reason to regret your visit to the harem of Saïfula Pasha."

“ Heaven fulfil the promise of your Highness !” said Maniolopolo significantly ; and, amid the most perfect stillness, with the beautiful and agitated Carimfil immediately before him, and the sad and gentle Mherpirwir at his side, he thus began his narration.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ADVENTURES OF THE BARBER OF
BASSORA.

IN the famous city of Bassora, about a hundred years ago, lived a worthy khamal,* named Husref, who was remarkable, first for his immense strength of muscle, which enabled him to carry upon his back the loads of two men ; and some, indeed, went so far as to say, the lading of an ass ; and for the fact of never having become the father of a child which had not some natural defect.

There was Medjid the one-eyed ; Riffat the one-sided ; Chiamil the three-fingered ; Mezvir the bow-legged ; Elfi the hare-lipped ; and Moctaleb the left-handed. These were his sons ; and though his wife Minè,† who was the

* Street-porter.

† Enamel.

only child of a sign-painter, had been one of the prettiest girls in the somewhat obscure street in which she resided, he was not one whit more fortunate with his daughters. Djamilè was hump-backed, Hafizè was red-haired, Libabè was celebrated for a limp, and Zeinip was stone deaf. In short, it could not be denied that they were a remarkable family.

With ten children, and about as many paras a day, a man cannot be considered to be perfectly independant ; and poor Husref accordingly sometimes ate his olives without bread, and generally his bread without caviare ; but, somehow or other, all the children contrived to live on, being occasionally permitted to plunge their hands into the pillauf of a neighbour, when they never failed to avail themselves freely of the privilege. Minè grumbled a good deal, it is true ; and seldom failed to remind her husband when he returned home after his day's labour, that, had she married the oda-bashi* of the Pasha's guard, who was killed in an encounter with a predatory tribe of Arabs, and whose widow had been pensioned by the Satrap, instead of a beggarly khamal, who dared not wag his beard before the meanest functionary of the city, she

* Corporal.

should have been as great a person as Habitoullah, the wife of Marsouk the melon-merchant, whose feridjhe* had been twice new-lined since her marriage ; while her own was dropping into such holes that she should not long be able to walk the bazar for very shame. She had many other little complaints also, as unpleasant as they were useless, with which she diurnally regaled his ears ; but the philosophic Husref heeded them not ; the heart of Minè was relieved by these outpourings of her discontent ; and her voice generally set the weary khamal to sleep, despite the noise of the ten children, who were all as spoilt, as happy, as dirty, and as ragged, as any domestic colony in that remote quarter of the city.

Thus the family of Husref the khamal, might altogether be said to prosper ; for when people continue for years to scold, to sleep, and to treat fortune like the sorry jade that she is, they cannot be considered as quite wretched ; and, in this way, constantly scrambling up the sandhill of life, sometimes buried up to his neck, and sometimes obtaining a momentary footing, the husband of Minè the regretful, continued to toil, and bear, and forbear, until his ten chil-

* Woman's cloak.

dren began to grow into men and women about him.

Matters now became serious. What was to be done with them? Husref uttered many an “ Inshallah !” but faith alone would not supply them with employment ; and the deep respirations of the anxious khamal, as he bent under his load, were now frequently lengthened into sighs.

About this time a Sherbetjhe, whose mother was the friend and gossip of Minè, demanded his daughter Hafizè in marriage, and he gave her as freely as he would have given a draught of water to a thirsty hadji. Good fortune is better than gold ; and a week or two after the marriage of the red-haired maiden, a Serudjhe of the neighbourhood offered to engage his son Mezvir in his stables, when the bow-legged youth at once found himself provided with food, labour, and a good bed of dhourra-leaves.* Riffat the one-sided, established himself as the keeper of a khan in the neighbourhood of his father’s house, by doing all the duty of a bent and crippled old man, who looked as though he were coeval with its walls, until the day of his death, when he bequeathed his keys, his wardrobe, his besom, his

* Indian corn.

flagged shed, and his ten paras a day, to the young volunteer; who at once declared himself independent, and commenced pilfering the travellers who frequented the caravanserai, and cleaning the court, on his own account.

All this was truly gratifying to the paternal pride of the khamal; and he congratulated himself in the contentment of his heart, that his sons were in a fair way to rise in the world, and to become men of mark. In the exuberance of his satisfaction he frequently forgot that there were still eight of his progeny at home; but the fact was soon forced upon his memory as he passed his narrow portal, and bent his head that he might not strike it against the door-sil, by the upbraidings of his wife, and the uproar and tumult of his growing family.

Things were in this state when one day, as Husref was leaning against the trunk of an acacia tree which overshadowed the wooden terrace of a coffee-shop near the meat-market, enjoying the fumes of a luxury which he did not at that moment possess a para to procure; a stranger descended from a jaded mule, not twenty paces from him, and throwing the bridle to a serudjhe who attended him, bade him take back the beast, and await him at the house of the person

he had named on their arrival in the city ; while at the same time, he beckoned to Husref to relieve the man of a moderately sized cypress-wood box, which rested on the neck of his own beast.

The khamal obeyed with alacrity ; and having possessed himself of the chest, carefully deposited it on the ground to await the further commands of his new employer.

“ Wallah ! you have a strong arm, Khamal ;” said the stranger, whom, from his garb, Husref supposed to be a Persian ; “ You are the very man I want. Here are ten piastras ;” and as he spoke he placed them in the hand of the astonished porter, who had not been master of such a sum for years ; “ Bid the cafeje here give you a cup of coffee, that your heart may be as light as your arm is steady ; and then away with you to the southern side of the Great Mosque, and there await me, taking care not to lose sight of the box.”

The delighted khamal lost not a moment in obeying this command. He swallowed the coffee, saluted the stranger with a fervent “ Allah es marladek — ” shouldered the chest, and started off at a light trot for the Great Mosque of the city.

" Ten piastres for traversing a stadia length of the street ;" he murmured joyously as he moved along ; " and with a mere feather-weight on my shoulder ; why I must surely have fallen in with Kāroon himself ! Y'Allah ! my felech is bright to-day. What shall I say to Minè ? If I tell her that I have earned ten piastres, they will melt like snow before the sun, for she will fancy herself a Khamal-bashi's wife ; No, no—I will say two—and with two piastres we shall sup well."

Having made this prudent resolution, the contented Husref jogged along, communing with his own thoughts, until he reached the principal mosque ; when taking up the position which had been indicated to him by the stranger, he placed the chest on the ground, and squatting himself beside it, removed his turban from his head, and concealed among its ragged folds the eight piastres which were to be the commencement of a hoard, amassed from the produce of as many such profitable adventures as the present, as it might please Allah to provide for him.

An hour passed away ; an hour of luxury to the toil-worn Husref, who had never once changed his position save to pick up a coin which was flung to him by a Frank traveller,

who seeing him seated there, covered with rags, and deep in thought, threw him a piece of money as a matter of course, and passed on.

“The Infidel dog is subjected by my felech:”* murmured Husref, as he possessed himself of the coin; “This is to be a white day. And what shall I do with this piastre? shall I tell Minè that I bring her three? or shall I conceal this also in my turban? or shall I——” and he glanced across the narrow street; “shall I fill my bag with gebeli, and smoke a comfortable pipe or two of the strong-savouried Latakia?—Chok chay—that is much: it shall be so.” And having first glanced in every direction to ascertain that no person was passing to carry off his trust, he shuffled along at his best speed to a shop in the neighbourhood, where he purchased a modest quantity of the coveted luxury, and then returned and re-established himself beside the chest.

* Constellation.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ADVENTURES OF THE BARBER OF BAS-SORA—*continued.*

THE chibouque was soon lighted ; and as the heavy fumes of the strong and coarse tobacco curled over his beard, the happy Husref, with a joyous feeling of secret prosperity, began to muse on his family affairs.

“ Two sons and a daughter respectably established—eight piastres among the folds of my turban, with fifteen paras of change from the gebeli in my girdle — Shekiur Allah ! Husref the khamal will yet rise in the world. But my dear son Moctaleb—my favourite son,—By the beard of the Prophet ! his fortune is as left-handed as himself, or his fine eyes would ere this have filled his girdle with jeb-khargi*—

* Pocket-money.

Something must be done for Moctaleb; he desires to be a barber, and nothing could be better; but the shop, the soap, the razors, the towels, and the basins, must be paid for; and where is the money?"

This was an uncomfortable question, for it was one to which the anxious father could not satisfactorily reply, and he therefore did the best thing which could be done under such circumstances; he determined to leave the matter to Providence, and to think of something else.

The next subject of contemplation that he selected could not have been a very entertaining one, for he was just dropping off to sleep, when an acquaintance who chanced to be passing with a large basin in his hand, roused him once more into consciousness by offering to share with him a copious draught of boza* which had just been given to him in payment of some service that he had rendered to a cafèjhe.

The khamal did not hesitate to accept the offer: and his friend, having first secured his own share, handed the basin to Husref, who emptied it at a draught; and the man having passed on, he resumed his reverie, which, blending with the intoxicating fumes of the boza, soon

* A strong beverage, composed of raki, pimento, and mint.

completely overpowered him. His head sank on the chest, his limbs became relaxed, his breathing heavy, and in five seconds he was dead asleep.

How long he had been in the land of dreams he knew not, when he was suddenly aroused by the fearful cry of "Yan guen var!"* and the harsh stroke of the iron-tipped staff of the fire-guard on the rude pavement of the street. He instinctively started from the earth, and rubbed his eyes as he perceived that he was surrounded by a pitchy darkness, through which he glanced about him to discover the direction of the fire; a fact which he had no sooner ascertained, than in the confusion of the moment, totally forgetting the chest, and almost his own identity, he rushed forward to the scene of ruin, and was soon busily employed in rendering assistance to the sufferers.

When, after the lapse of an hour, he remembered the box, and hurriedly returned to the spot where he had left it, it was too late — the chest was gone !

Husref dashed his turban upon the earth, and almost yelled in the agony of his spirit. How should he face his employer? he, who had be-

* There is a fire.

trayed his trust. How should he take his stand on the accustomed spot? He who was no longer worthy of confidence—who had blackened his own face through his intemperate folly—and scattered dirt in his beard?

While he thus bitterly reproached himself, he heard a step rapidly approaching; he looked despairingly in the direction whence it sounded, and beheld the stranger within half a dozen paces of him, in the gray light of the dawn.

“Haidè—come along, khamal;” said the well-remembered voice; “I have made you keep a long vigil, but it shall not be an unprofitable one. But what is this!” he exclaimed, hurriedly glancing round: “Where is the chest?”

The affrighted Husref sank upon his knees, and with quivering lips related the whole history of his misfortune. The stranger listened anxiously, and at the conclusion of the story, he broke into a low and bitter laugh, as he murmured beneath his breath; “Ajaib!—the krsz* is welcome to his prize—he knew not his own errand, and has saved us some labour. Korkma,—fear not, my friend; you are forgiven; but look well to yourself in future, and when

* Thief.

you have a treasure in charge, beware of boza.
Will you promise me this?"

" Bashustun — on my head be it!" said Husref emphatically: " I am the slave of my lord for ever. I am less than a dog before him — and here ;" and as he spoke, he took off his ragged turban whence he drew the hidden piastres, to which he added those which he carried in his no less ragged girdle; " here are the wages that I have forfeited by my mad folly. The value of the chest I cannot replace for I am poor, miserably poor, and I have a wife and eight children under my squalid roof who look to me for bread ; while I possess but fifteen paras in the world. Have mercy on me, Effen-dim, for those fifteen paras are my all."

" Put up your money ;" said the stranger, turning aside his hand ; " Do you take me for as great a brigand as the pezevenk who has run off with our chest of cypress-wood ? But your eight children—we must talk of this — I will accompany you to your house——"

" House !" echoed the dismayed khamal ; " it is a hovel — my lord cannot pass under such a roof."

" Gel, gel — come, come ; no more of this ;" smiled the stranger ; " I have taken a liking to

you, in spite of the strong boza, and the stolen box. I must see these eight children ; and I have already fasted many hours—here is gold—let your wife prepare for me a pillauf of chicken well spiced, and purchase a rug for me to lie down upon, and a prayer-carpet to enable me to perform my devotions, until I establish myself elsewhere. I wish to avoid the public khans."

" My lord's will is mine ;" said Husref, bewildered by the extraordinary nature of the proposal, and the contemplation of a chicken-pillauf prepared at his own mangal ;* " but I have a son, a youth of discretion and honesty, who is keeper of a khan not fifty paces from my poor dwelling, who would lay his forehead in the dust before the saviour of his father ; and it is so long a time since Minè has tried her skill in the cooking of a chicken——"

" That this morning she will prepare two for us, that the task may be more easy ;" interrupted the stranger ; " and now, let us away at once, for the sun is rising above the city walls, and we have both passed a busy night."

And so saying he gathered his cloak about him, and turned in the direction indicated by the astonished Husref.

* A brazier containing heated charcoal.

CHAPTER XX.

THE ADVENTURES OF THE BARBER OF BAS-SORA—*continued.*

THE Khamal and his companion proceeded slowly along the narrow and gloomy streets of the city until they reached the quarter in which stood the squalid habitation of the bewildered Husref. As they made their way, the stranger asked a thousand questions relating to the family of the porter, the number of his children married and unmarried, the age and temper of his wife, and the personal appearance of his daughters; and he could not conceal his amusement when the confiding Husref, warmed into good fellowship by the condescension of his stately employer, imparted to him the singular ill luck which had attended all his progeny, and

the seal that had been set upon each at its birth.

“ Mashallah ! ’tis like an Arab tale ;” smiled the stranger ; “ they brought a name into the world with them, and you might have saved yourself the trouble of giving them a second. However, something must be done, and I at once adopt Moctaleb as my own child ; for he has the same defect as myself, and as I have never found that it affected my fortunes, neither ought it to mar those of your favourite son.”

“ Allah buyûk der !” apostrophised the delighted khamal ; “ what am I that my lord should repay my transgression of the past night by a benefit of which I am too blind to see the limit ?—But, yavash, Effendimou — here is a kibaub-shop, where I shall do well to turn a portion of your gold into food. I will make my bargain, and be with you in a moment ; but I must go alone, or the bash pezevenk* will make me pay with my eyes for all his dainties.”

The stranger nodded acquiescence ; and the happy Husref, assuming a consequential air, consequent on the contact of the coin which he held closely pressed against his horny palm, stept gravely across the swoln and unsavoury

* Great rogue.

kennel that intersected the street, to the tempting counter of the kibaub-merchant.

Here he gazed for awhile in luxurious indecision, coveting every thing, and purchasing nothing, until he was aroused by the remonstrance of the dealer, who demanded angrily why he did not pursue his path, instead of gloating over his edibles, and, perhaps, for aught he knew to the contrary, infecting his food by the influence of the Evil Eye at the very opening of the shutters.

"Ne istersinez — what do you want?" answered the khamal impatiently; "I come here as a customer — Give me a basin of tchorba,* a dish of dolmas,† a lump of keftas,‡ half a dozen quails for the pillauf, as many kibaub skewers, half an okè of tchalva,§ a dozen fetyrs,|| and a chicken."

"Ajaib ust — it is wonderful!" said the merchant, stroking down his well-trimmed and bushy beard; "a khamal boldly orders the repast of a Pasha; but the piastres—where are they?"

The customer replied by slowly opening his fingers, and displaying the piece of gold.

"Chok chay—that is much;" said the kibaub-

* Soup. † Balls made of rice and chopped meat.

‡ Force meat. § A composition of flour, honey, and oil.

|| Thin cakes eaten warm, with honey or sugar.

merchant; "now, we will to business." And without further delay he began to pack the required dainties into a small basket.

When the articles were safely arranged, the bargaining commenced, and the asseverations of the dealer, who swore lustily by his beard that he was almost giving away his property, had not the slightest effect upon the khamal; who, when he found that the kibaub-merchant was determined to hold out until the last moment, gravely remarked that there were other shops in the city whose owners had the fear of the Prophet before their eyes, and turned towards the door. His departure was, however, by no means to be permitted; and, accordingly, after a little more wrangling, the gold coin of the stranger was changed, the basket shouldered by the khamal, and himself sturdily on his way to rejoin his employer.

In a short time after the purchase was made, Husref stopped at the threshold of his dwelling. It was the remnant of what had once been a substantial and spacious house, but time and fire had left it little more than a tottering and blackened wreck. Portions of wall, of a thickness which might apparently have defied destruction, were still visible; but the principle part

of the structure had been composed of wood, and all that now remained, save the rude and solid blocks of masonry already alluded to, were irregularly shaped and smoky-looking spaces, cumbered with rubbish and creeping plants, and grim with ruin. Niched among these uninviting relics of bygone comfort, and leaning against one of the remaining fragments of wall, rose the wooden tenement of Husref the khamal, like the abode of the presiding genius of destruction ; and through the ill-hung door of this squalid dwelling did he lead the stranger ; who, however he might have prepared himself for the sight of poverty and discomfort, found that the reality far outran his anticipations.

The hovel consisted of one immense roughly-paved apartment, a portion being screened off for the harem by a time-worn curtain of baize, attached to the ceiling and walls by huge skewers of tough wood. Not an effort at ornament or even comfort was visible; all was bleak, cheerless, uncompromising poverty. The wretched divan which occupied one side of the outer apartment was covered with blue and white checked cotton, patched with pieces of stuff of all colours and qualities ; and the only object that relieved the eye was the branch of a wild fig-tree which had

rooted itself among the rubbish of the ruin, and now flaunted its rich large leaves through the rude unglazed opening that served as a window, and could only be secured from the weather by a wooden shutter.

But, as the stranger stepped across the threshold, he saw nothing of all this, for his gaze was riveted on a groupe in the centre of the floor. Kneeling upon the stones, her head bent over a chest, and her face uncovered, he beheld the wife of the khamal, while beside her stood three youths, one of whom was tall and handsome; and close behind her a younger female, who had a tattered shawl flung about her head.

A word from Husref, as he followed close behind his employer, sent the women shrieking behind the screen; and revealed fully to the stranger a fact which he had already suspected — It was indeed his own lost chest which stood in the centre of the khamal's floor.

As for the astonished Husref, he darted forward, and flung himself upon the box in an extacy of delight — called it his eyes, and his soul — and committed a thousand extravagancies, which, in so grave a man, were like the gambols of a donkey; while the three youths looked on in astonishment, and glanced from

their excited father to his silent companion in undisguised amaze.

“ Na to ne, na to ne—there it is, there it is !” at length exclaimed the happy Husref: “ the very chest which my lord gave into my keeping ! Allah buyûk der — He is great ; and my face is whitened. Wallah billah ! I may once more lift up my head in the bazâr, for my selech has washed away my shame—Speak, Effendimou—my master, is not this indeed the stolen box.”

“ It is, indeed ;” said the stranger with a bitter laugh ; “ and all that it contains is my property.”

A faint shriek was heard from behind the screen, followed by an angry whisper ; and the stranger started and turned suddenly towards the tallest of the youths, as he demanded sternly: “ Has the lid of that chest been lifted ? And how came it here ?”

“ Let not my lord nurse displeasure against his slave ;” answered the young man deprecatingly ; “ My father left his home yesterday at dawn to ply his trade in the city, and for many hours we heeded not an absence which was frequently of long occurrence ; but when the night fell, our mother became restless and unhappy.—Some evil had perchance overtaken her husband

—we all fasted, for we had no provision in the house; and as the darkness became more dense, and our alarm increased, I set off to search for my father in the city streets. For hours I wandered hither and thither, having no clue to direct my steps; the night advanced; and there were few persons stirring save the guard, who, as they patrolled the town, frequently obliged me to crouch down to avoid them, lest they should make me prisoner; and it was when thus endeavouring to escape their notice in the neighbourhood of the Great Mosque, that, as I skulked into a corner, I struck my head against a hard substance, which I at once discovered to be a chest. Astonished at such a circumstance;—for, as the soldiers passed on, I ascertained that no living soul was in the street; I at once understood that this must be an immediate interpolation of my felech; and I resolved to possess myself of the box until the return of my father, who would be able to decide on the steps necessary to be taken with my prize. Having come to this decision, I slowly left the Mosque, and with the chest on my shoulder, turned in the direction of our abode; but the reappearance of the city-guard compelled me to diverge from the direct path, and to take one much more cir-

cuitous ; for I well knew that whatever might be the contents of the box, my appearance, and the incoherent account which I should give, both of it and myself, could not fail to create suspicion which might entail upon me danger, if not absolute destruction. While I was thus engaged, a cry of ‘ Fire !’ came on the wind, and I hastily looked about for a secure hiding-place for my treasure, that I might hurry to the assistance of the unfortunates whom Allah had visited in his wrath.

“ I readily found one ; for, not a hundred paces from the spot where I stood, I remembered to have often remarked a small enclosure containing a tomb which must have been that of some one of note ; for the iron grating that enclosed it had been richly wrought and gilt, and there were traces of the chisel on the solid masonry of the monument. But its glory had long been gone by : the iron balustrade had rusted and given way ; and a rank crop of nettles grew about the stone-work of the tomb. Among these weeds I concealed the chest, and then echoing the thrilling cry of ‘ Yan guen var !’ I sprang forward in the direction of the flames, which were already draping the solemn heavens with crimson, and putting out the stars.

“ For awhile I forgot the chest; for as the burning rafters gave way, and in their fall, flung showers of golden stars against the sky, I heard a faint cry of anguish; it was the voice of a woman; and I remember only that in the next moment I was surrounded by fire, bright, scorching fire, which seemed to dry the marrow in my bones; and that I was busy tearing from the head and face of a young female a blazing veil of muslin which she clutched with convulsive power—Then I was once more in the free air, with the wind of heaven playing upon my brow; and the young beauty whom I had saved was in the arms of an aged Emir, who was covering her with the shawl from his own waist, and calling upon her by every tender name that parental fondness ever lavished upon the object of its idolatry, to look up and tell her anxious father that she lived. But the faded lily spoke not—and at length—”

“ You remembered the chest, and returned to seek it — was it not so, my son ? ” asked the khamal.

“ I did :* replied Moctaleb ; “ and the dawn was breaking as I reached the burial-place, and once more took possession of my prize. I now dreaded no encounter, and walked boldly for-

ward with my burthen, until I reached the threshold of my home ; when endeavouring to rest the chest against a block of masonry while I pushed back the door, it slipped from my hold, and burst open with the fall."

" And you saw the contents ?" asked the stranger.

" Even so :" replied the youth ; " and having done so, I determined at once to carry the box to some obscure spot, and there leave it to be found by any passer-by ; but as I prepared to do so, I recognised the cord that was about it to be that of my father ; and I instantly changed my resolution, and having closed the lid, I brought the mysterious chest into the house."

" Mysterious indeed !" murmured the stranger as if unconsciously ; but instantly recovering himself, he said blandly : " Enough of this for to-day, good youth ; we are all weary : let us eat, and drink, and then endeavour to sleep. Close the door, and shut out the growing light ; lend me a beenish to wrap about me, or a rug to lie down upon, when we have finished our repast ; and as I have brought terror under your roof by the contents of that unlucky box, I will to-night make you acquainted with their history. We all require rest ; and while I am your guest, you

shall have a respite from labour. So now, khamal, to our repast."

After some delay the meal was served; but first the three-fingered Chiamil had to seek coals to heat the mangal, and the one-sided Riffat butter to stew the pillauf; while the hump-backed Djamilè, with a shred of well-mended muslin folded about her face, spread the tray, and filled the delf cups with water. Minè was all activity; she hurried the exertions of the limping Libabè; restrained the volubility of the hump-backed Djamilè; and shook her clenched hand at the mischievous Zeinip, whose deafness rendered her inaccessible to wordy menace.

Thanks to these feminine exertions, all was at length ready; and the stranger having insisted that Husref and his sons should share his meal, they were soon squatted round the tray, feasting heartily upon such fare as they had never before tasted save in their dreams: while the women, carefully veiled, waited on them most assiduously, and dexterously changed the dishes in time to secure for themselves a sufficient portion of their contents.

The meal over, Husref and his guest lighted their chibouques, and established themselves on the hard, straw-stuffed divan; while the young

men retired to the lower end of the apartment, to converse in whispers on the extraordinary events of the night; and the women huddled together behind the screen rapidly demolished the reliques of the feast.

In another hour all slept under the roof of the khamal; and the muezzin had proclaimed the mid-day prayer from the minaret of every mosque in the city ere the weary family were again astir. Another hearty meal commenced the business of the day; and although to avoid the observation of the neighbours, Husref and his sons bent their way to the bazar and mingled with the crowd, they only purchased provisions, and returned home as evening set in, to listen to the promised narrative of the stranger.

The appointed hour arrived; and the owner of the chest having directed Moctaleb to lift it into the centre of the floor, seated himself upon a beenish beside it; and leaning his elbow upon the lid, as the khamal and his family squatted themselves beside him, he calmly desired the young man to explain the nature of its contents.

Moctaleb turned pale, and involuntarily glanced towards his father.

“ You are an ass, and the father of asses!” said Husref impatiently; “ there can be neither

an afrit nor a ghoul shut into the chest — Why then do you not speak?"

" It contains ;" replied the young man in a low voice ; " a human eye, a human ear, a foot, a heart, a hand, and a dagger——"

" True, as though the Ibn Sallah* himself had counted them ;" said the imperturbable stranger : and then regardless of the horror which was depicted on every countenance around him, he slowly laid his spread palm on the lid of the chest, and began his story.

* Son of prayer.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ADVENTURES OF THE BARBER OF BASSORA—*continued.*

“ My name is Hussein, and I was born in this good city of Bassora just four and forty years ago, during the feast of the Baïram, amid festivities and rejoicings which were considered to be of good omen both to mother and child. How far they fulfilled the prophecy will appear hereafter.

“ My father had been an Emir Hadj,* a man of good repute, and tolerable fortune; who had more than once conducted a caravan of Franks across the Desart, and been generously paid by the Infidels for his guidance and protection. Some evil tongues had indeed insinuated more than once that, in the occasional and apparently

* A conductor of pilgrims.

not altogether accidental encounters of his caravans with the predatory Arabs, traces of a good understanding might be discerned between him and his enemies, which considerably militated against his integrity, while they increased the contents of his jeppa ;* but the world is so censorious that it is only prudent to shut the ears of conviction against the voice of reproach.

“ My mother Gumush† was the daughter of a lapidary who had more science than piastres, and whose fortune was to the full as hard as the gems he fashioned. I never knew her save as a widow ; for my father expired of plague in the Desart before I was a year old ; caught as we were told, by his having rifled the pockets of a dying hadji who had joined the caravan about an hour before, with the poison in his veins. My eldest brother took charge of the caravan, and conducted it safely to its destination ; but we suddenly lost sight of him, and it was not until many years afterwards, when my mother was no more, and I was established in my native city, that we again heard of him as an eminent Emir Hadj, trading to and from Bagdad.

“ As for me, my mother having married again, and her husband, a handsome young

* Pocket.

† Silver.

sekeljhi,* being to the full as enamoured of her piastres as of her person, and finding me determined against following his surfeiting trade under his very unpromising auspices, provision was soon made for me in the shop of an Armenian barber, whose skill in bleeding and shaving was notorious through the whole city.

“ The bustle and gossipry of the public room delighted me. Not an occurrence could take place in Bassora but it was whispered in the house of my master ; not an event was prognosticated but the prophecy might be traced to one of his customers. In short, it was the news-room and scandal-factory of the city. Many a worthy Moslem lost his beard on the very spot where his wife had lost her character not an hour before ; and not unfrequently the cause of the one assisted at the disappearance of the other.

“ Excited and amused by the conversation of the customers, I soon became an adept in the business, and at twelve years old, standing upon a stool, I have smoothed the chin of many of the least profitable frequenters of the establishment. But this pleasant state of things could not last for ever.

“ As I grew older I began to twist my turban

* Sweetmeat-maker.

into richer folds, and to give an extra turn to my girdle ; for as I walked through the bazar to operate upon some of our wealthier employers at their own houses, I not unfrequently caught the low murmur of admiration which stole from beneath the yashmacs of the women as I passed them ; and I learnt to understand that my personal advantages far outran my fortunes. At first I smiled as this conviction forced itself upon me, for my vanity was satisfied, and I did not look beyond its indulgence ; but gradually I began to imagine myself injured, and to compare myself with every individual who frequented the house, until I became convinced that I indeed deserved the name which was frequently applied to me of ‘the handsome Barber of Bassora ;’ and to encourage a horde of romantic and foolish visions that well nigh turned my brain.

“ The few spare piastres which I had formerly spent in tchalva and mahalibè, I now hoarded until they would purchase for me some article of finery ; and I listened with avidity to the tales of the massaldjis when they told the love of the great lady of a princely harem for some lowly one of the land.

“ My beard and mustachios were as black and bright as the wing of the raven ; and I

never failed when I was about to apply the perfumed oil to the shaven head of a customer, to pass my open palm over them as if by accident ; by which means they became thick and glossy, and were the envy of many a proud young Bey, who would have paid every hair with a piastre, could he have called them his own.

“ You may imagine what ensued ; and you will not be surprised to hear that I soon listened in trembling to many a tale of scandal, of which I previously knew all the details. Many comments were made upon my dress, which had gradually become more and more expensive ; and suspicions of the truth were sometimes hinted to me by the gay young Beyzadehs who passed occasionally under my hand ; but as my discretion was even more powerful than my vanity, I affected never to understand their inferences, and they at length grew weary of criticising alike my garments and my humour.

“ I led this life for years ; during which my master died, and left me sole heir to his business, with a trifling sum in money, which I gave in secret to my mother, whose young husband had long ago forgotten that he owed to her his present prosperity, and who felt the sting of poverty coupled with the bitterness of neglect. The

will of Allah was, however, soon accomplished ; for the tears of regret at her past folly which she continually shed, brought her to the brink of the grave, and she sank gently into it, with a blessing upon her lips which was all for me !

“ I resigned to no one my place at the head of her coffin, and I stood and saw the earth flung upon the remains of my misguided but gentle parent ; and when I turned away, I remembered that my brother’s abode was unknown to me, and that I was alone in the world.

“ But this feeling of sadness did not last long ; the path of life was strown with flowers for me, and the death of my mother was a dark cloud which soon passed away from the sky of my existence. I divided my time between the duties of my profession, which I lightened by piquant anecdotes drawn from secret and authentic sources, which bewildered and delighted my listeners ; and by the labours of the toilette, where I worshipped with all the ardour of vanity.

“ Years passed over me : and a new race of beauties afforded me new opportunities of conquest ; I was courted for my personal beauty, and trusted for my discretion ; and I should probably have lived and died happily, had not

my evil stars led me one day at noon under the windows of the harem of a wealthy Bey, who was absent on an expedition in a distant province.

"To amuse the solitude of his young wife, the Bey had invited to his palace his only sister, who was betrothed to the Pasha of Damascus ; and this fair dame, who by no means relished the retirement in which the wife of her brother thought proper to spend the months of his absence, had already decided on departing from Bassora ; when on the day in question, as she sat playing with her tusbee on the divan under the casement, gazing through the lattices, and wishing herself far from the dull palace of her kinsman, she chanced to see me pass along the street.

"'Tchapouk, tchapouk — quick, quick, Sel-häi ;' she exclaimed to a slave who was passing through the apartment ; 'for the first time I see a handsome man in Bassora — kim der — who is it ?'

"'Effendim ;' replied the maiden, as she glanced through the jalousie ; 'the sun shines on our street to-day ; that is Hussein the Barber.'

"'Barber !' echoed the young beauty incredulously ; 'Mashallah ! if the barbers of Bassora carry such brows as that, your Beyzadehs must touch the clouds !'

“ ‘ Nevertheless, madam, that is in truth Hussein the barber ; and if the zamparalik* of the city may be depended on, you are not the first young beauty whom his bright eyes have thralled.’

“ ‘ Ey vah ! ’ replied the lady ; ‘ you are too quick-witted, Selhāi ; but your barber may well turn the heads of half the city beauties. Does he vend perfumes and essences ? ’

“ ‘ Both, and of the best ; ’ answered the slave ; when, receiving no further intimation that her presence was required, she proceeded on her errand, and the Bey’s sister was left alone.

“ I shall not weary you with words. Ere long the lady repented her request to quit the city, and the very name of the Pasha of Damascus became distasteful to her ; but she was nevertheless compelled to abide by an arrangement which she had herself made ; and you will not be surprised to hear that ere she took leave of her brother’s wife, I had already disposed of my business, settled all my affairs, and was on my way to the ancient city of Damascus.

“ I had taken care to provide myself with sufficient raiment of goodly fashion and material, to obliterate every trace of the barber from my appearance ; and as the Pasha had sent a party

* Scandal.

of his own people to escort the lady, and some of the slaves of his own harem to attend her, there was little danger of detection when I boldly presented myself at the palace of the Pashalic, and announced myself as the younger son of a noble house, anxious to serve under the Satrap of Damascus.

“ The Yûzbashi of the palace-guard was won by my appearance ; and when, as we stopped to take coffee together in the bazar, I presented to him an amber mouth-piece which he chanced to admire as we filled our chibouques from my own tobacco-purse, he vowed an eternal friendship with his new and liberal ally. He was a brave young man, and much beloved by the Pasha ; and he might have alarmed my vanity, had he not been disfigured by a scymitar wound which had distorted his features, and given a grim expression to his countenance.

“ With such an advocate, I soon found myself a member of the Satrap’s household ; and as my heart was light, and my humour joyous, I speedily became a favourite in the palace ; but the harem was a sealed book ; and despite all my endeavours, I could not even succeed in addressing one of the slaves.

“ As I had not abandoned my liberty at Bas-

sora to lead the life of a dependant at Damascus, I soon began to repent my precipitation, and to meditate a return to my native city ; when one evening as I was slowly crossing the court-yard to visit the guards, an aged woman, evidently belonging to the Pasha's harem, passed close beside me ; and muttering ‘ Ekhi kateti—there is something :’ in an under tone, and with an air of mystery, dropped a small embroidered handkerchief at my feet as if by accident, and then shuffled hastily away.

“ I did not immediately stoop to secure the prize ; but stopping suddenly as if by an impulse of thought, I stood for a minute or two motionless ; and then letting fall my own handkerchief upon that which lay on the ground, lest I might be watched from the palace windows, I picked up both together, and thrust them into my girdle.

“ When I had retired to my chamber I lost no time in examining the mysterious handkerchief, and, as I had expected, I found amid its folds a small roll of paper, on which were written these words—

“ ‘ Hussein—you know the pavilion of crimson silk which the Pasha has erected in the garden of the harem—I will be there at midnight. Be silent and cautious. The Rose to the Bulbul.’

“ I read the scroll thrice over before I could believe that my eyes had not deceived me; and as the conviction slowly forced itself upon my mind that it was indeed no delusion of the fancy, but that I was really summoned to the presence of the Pasha’s bride, my heart became divided between joy and terror. True, I loved the lady; but the love of a vain young man who has been taught the value of his own attractions, is never sufficiently divested of selfishness to impel him to extremity in the indulgence of his affections. As I felt towards the Pasha’s wife, so had I already felt towards several other beauties; the sole tie which she possessed upon my heart that was new to its experience, was the pride of a nobler conquest than any it had yet made.

“ With this divided and calm spirit of calculation, the idea of the crimson tent of the harem-garden brought with it a heavy feeling of probable danger. The walls were high; the nights clear and moonlighted; the palace-guard zealous and alert; and I was but too conscious that if I were surprised by the negroes of the Pasha, they would extend little mercy to my crime.

“ I flung myself upon my divan in a tumult of thought. The very hope of such an adventure had brought me to Damascus, and yet now

that it presented itself a foreboding of evil grew upon me which would not be shaken off. There was, nevertheless, no alternative ; my position in the Pasha's household was worse than precarious should I offend his last and favourite wife ; and in our interviews at Bassora, I had had many opportunities of ascertaining that the fair Habè was as uncompromising in her hate as in her love ; and that she would probably not hesitate to sacrifice even me, should she believe me capable of slighting her affection.

" Thus then I resolved to trust to my felech,* and to obey her summons ; with a firm determination to represent to her during the interview, all the perils which beset us both ; and to implore her for her own sake to bid me farewell for ever. During my residence in the palace, I had heard frightful tales of the Pasha's jealousy, and its effects : and as he was passionately attached to the lovely Habè, I could but apprehend the worst should he discover that she did not return his attachment.

" With this resolution, I remained quietly in my chamber until the dark clouds of night, powdered with silver drops, draped the pale moon in her robe of midnight ; when stealthily passing

* Constellation.

the palace gates, I crouched along under the wall of the garden until, amid the trees, I saw the golden crescent of the pavilion glittering in the moonlight. Here I paused, and as I glanced cautiously around, I traced a dark shadow on the wall which extended from the summit to within a few feet of the ground. I stealthily approached it, and discovered that it was a shawl which I recognised as belonging to the lady Habè; and I at once understood that it was intended to facilitate my entrance into the garden.

“ For a moment a dread of treachery glanced through my mind, but I dismissed the suspicion as it rose; and having ascertained that the shawl was well secured on the other side, I at once swung myself to the top of the wall, and sprang into the inclosure. My feet had scarcely touched the earth, when my hand was softly grasped, and I was rapidly led on through the darkness of a laurel plantation in the direction of the pavilion.

“ I did not attempt to utter a syllable, for I was convinced that the clasp was that of Habè, but I deceived myself; for as my guide lifted the crimson curtain of the tent, I discovered that I had been conducted thither by a young

and beautiful slave, who, pointing towards a portion of the pavilion which was flooded with moonlight, silently withdrew to a distance.

“To fling myself at the feet of the lady Habè, and to lift her fair hand to my lips and brow, was the work of a moment; and as I gazed upon her in the soft crimson light flung over her by the rich curtains of the pavilion, I thought that I had never before beheld any thing so lovely. I forgot my wise resolutions of the evening—I forgot my peril and my perfidy; and I was pouring out before her all the passionate tenderness of my spirit, when a faint shriek from the young attendant aroused us from our dream of love, as a hideous negro raised the screen of the tent, and glared full upon us with his flashing eyes!

“‘ Fly, Hussein, fly ! and fear not for me ;’ hastily whispered the lady: ‘ Geosumin nu-rissin—you are the light of my eyes; and your death would destroy me—Fly ! and ere long you shall be convinced that you have nothing to fear !’

“As she spoke, I sprang to my feet, and would have seized the intruder, but she held me back.

“‘ Delhibashi—Prince of madmen ! away with
vol. III

N

you!' she exclaimed, as the negro rushed through the garden in the direction of the palace : ' and leave the rest to me.'

" With the disappearance of the negro, my reason returned ; and waiting no further bidding, I soon cleared the walk of the Pasha's grounds, and as I fled I heard the shrieks of the lady and her attendant ringing upon the air. The sound added wings to my speed ; and availing myself of my knowledge of every avenue of the palace, I was one of the first to present myself in the great hall to inquire the cause of the outcry ; having moreover taken the precaution to snatch up another turban as I passed through my apartment, and to gird on my scymitar. I calculated on the re-entrance of the negro through the harem, of which he must possess the key, a secure, but circuitous way ; and I was aware that this circumstance would enable me, if I exerted my best speed, at least to reach the salemiek at the same instant as himself.

" My good star was in the ascendant, for the eyes of the Pasha fell on me as he hastily left his chamber to ascertain the nature of the disturbance.

" ' La illaha illallah—there is but one Allah !' he said in a tone of alarm : ' tell me, my good

Toussun? (for such was the name that I bore at Damascus) ‘ tell me, what is all this ?’

“ ‘ May my lord’s prosperity increase ; ’ I replied as calmly as I could ; ‘ I understand nothing of this tumult, save that I hear the voices of women, shrieking out in terror, as though their souls were escaping through their lips.’

“ Further colloquy was prevented by the entrance of a negro, who, trembling with rage, and breathless with haste, flung himself at the feet of the Satrap, exclaiming :

“ ‘ Justice and vengeance, my lord the Pasha ! Justice and vengeance ! Your privacy has been invaded, and your harem polluted by an officer of your own household, by a slave of your own mercy——’

“ ‘ How say you, wretch ?’ thundered out the Satrap, drawing his handjar ; ‘ name the miscreant, that I may stab him with my own hand.’

“ ‘ It is Toussun the Yûzbashi ; ’ gasped out the negro ; but before he had time to utter another syllable, I sprang beyond the reach of the Pasha’s weapon, and boldly confronted my kneeling accuser.

“ ‘ Liar and traitor !’ I yelled out with all the

impetuosity which a sense of my danger was calculated to inspire, and conscious that my fate hung upon the events of the next few moments: ‘ Whose dog are you that would poison the ears of his Highness with such filth as this? Look at me, miscreant; and dare to say that I have stirred from my post this night——’

“ The negro instinctively obeyed; and as he turned his eyes upon me, he was evidently struck by a change in my appearance which he could not explain to himself: and this momentary hesitation saved me.

“ ‘ Vile slave! ’ shouted the Pasha; ‘ Could you find no one on whom to fasten a lie save my faithful Toussun? the first of my chaoushes whom I met on entering the hall? What is this mystery? But it shall be unravelled at once.’ And so saying, he beckoned to him four of the negro guard; and desiring me to keep strict watch over the trembling wretch whose zeal had brought him nothing but bitterness, he passed into the harem, whence the cries of the women could still be distinctly heard; for this scene, such as I have described it, had scarcely occupied a moment.

“ Directly the Satrap disappeared I gave orders to a couple of my palikars to secure the

arms of the crest-fallen guardian of the harem, who wasted his strength in revilings on me, on the women, on fate, and on his own folly ; and, meanwhile, the Pasha was busily investigating the cause of an uproar so unusual in his quiet and orderly household.

“ The result did not transpire until the following morning. The quailing cause of the riot was claimed at my hands by the four negroes who had accompanied the Satrap to the women’s apartments, and carried away no one inquired whither. The Pasha did not appear again ; and all remained silent and tranquil. But I stood on the crater of a volcano ; for at an early hour, another negro, undeterred by the disgrace of his companion, or probably convinced of the truth of his statement, and determined to revenge him, passed into the garden of the harem, and visited the pavilion with the keen glance of curiosity. Leaving the tent, where he found nothing to gratify his hope, he wandered along beneath the wall, and chancing to raise his eyes, he discovered the shawl, which in the alarm and hurry of the previous night had been forgotten.

“ Fortunately for me, the negro had a tongue which outran his wit, and sufficient of his errand transpired before he was admitted to the presence

of the Pasha, to impress upon my mind the necessity of an immediate retreat ; and I at once passed into my chamber to secure upon my person the jewels and money which I had secreted when I entered the service of the Satrap. As I was about to leave the room, I accidentally turned a last glance towards the divan, where I was surprised to see a small parcel folded in a dark handkerchief which was familiar to me. Without waiting to ascertain the nature of its contents, I concealed it beneath my robe, and mounting my horse, which was of the true Arab breed, I made my way to the clothes-bazär, and purchased the costume of an Arab Schiek, which I adjusted in a neglected mosque ; and then without another instant's delay, I hastened to the gate of the city, and passed it at foot's pace, as if careless of time ; but once upon the free plain, I buried the edge of my sharp stirrups in the flanks of my generous Arabian, and away we flew like the wind : danger and death were behind us ; and liberty and life before ; the choice was easy ; and I never drew bit until I felt the willing horse quiver under me as I urged him forward.

“ A few mouthfulls of fresh grass, and a deep draught at a cool stream that rippled

through the dense herbage, soon restored the generous animal ; while I refreshed myself by laving my limbs in the clear water, and swallowing some wild figs which I found in the vicinity of the rivulet.

“ As I had purposely avoided all traces of a frequented path, I deemed myself tolerably secure, many hours having elapsed since I left the city ; and picqueting my docile Arabian amid the tall grass, I laid myself down close beside him, and soon fell asleep. When I awoke the gray dawn was just breaking over the hills, and I felt the necessity of immediately pursuing my journey. I accordingly roused my horse, who was lying supine upon the earth in all the luxury of repose, and springing again into the saddle, incited him to his best speed. Again my constellation favoured me, for, after a couple of hours of hard riding, I fell in with a caravan that was crossing the Desart, which I immediately joined, greatly to the relief of my exhausted horse, and the furtherance of my own safety.

“ At the next town we reached, I once more changed my dress, and assumed that which I now wear ; and then for the first time, I examined the contents of the handkerchief that I

had found in my chamber. You, Moctaleb, have seen them in this chest. I know not with what tale the wily Habè amused the ear of the Pasha, but it is certain that his rage was craftily turned on the negro—and that he lent too ready an ear to the accusations of his beautiful young wife.

“ There was a scroll folded about the disgusting fragments of mortality, that partially explained the truth—thus it ran :—

“ ‘ I told you to trust to me, and I here give you proof that you did not trust in vain. A husband whose head is covered with a napkin, and whose eyes are dim, has revenged his wife upon her enemy, and you on your betrayer. I send you the eye that ventured to watch you—the ear that dared to listen to your words—the foot that followed your path—the hand that drew aside the screen—the heart that ventured to betray—and the dagger that was meant for another breast. I would not accept peace until these trophies were laid upon my carpet—and I send them to you as earnest of my love.’

“ I crushed the paper convulsively as I finished reading it. Could I indeed have loved this woman-fiend? I took the handkerchief in my hand, with the intention of hurling its contents into the

air; but a sudden impulse restrained me, and flinging them into the chest whence I had withdrawn my garments, I determined to carry them with me to Bassora, and thence, making some horrible addition to the hoard, to forward them by the next caravan to my tiger-hearted mistress. In order to effect this savage purpose, I prepared them with salt and spices after the Egyptian fashion, by which means they have been preserved. But I have already almost repented my intention; for the distance which now separates us has left only the memory of her beauty and her love upon the tablet of my soul, while all the horrors of our final meeting appear but as a dark vapour, shedding its gloom over a scene of brightness."

The stranger paused for a moment amid a deep silence; after which he resumed in an altered tone.

"Other memories and feelings have also grown upon me since I entered my native city. I have recognized, even amid the disfigurement of poverty, my long-lost pilgrim-brother—and I have become conscious that life has better and nobler joys than vengeance."

As he spoke, the tearful Hussein extended his arms to the Khamal, who flung himself into

them, exclaiming ; “ I learnt the truth from the very beginning of your story, my lord and brother ; but I would not darken the sky of your prosperity by telling you that the wretched Husref was the once-happy Emir Hadj—Alas ! alas ! I have also much to tell, but not to-night.”

“ Alhemdullilah — be it even as you will ;” replied Hussein, kissing his lips and forehead : “ I knew you from the first moment when you lifted the chest from the mule in the public street ; and it was to test your probity that I left it in your charge during so many hours. The will of Allah is accomplished ! We have met again ; and we will part no more ; one roof shall in future cover the Hadj-Khamal and the Barber of Bassora.”

PART IV.

CHAPTER XXII.

“ **MASHALLAH!**” said the Pasha, as the story ended; “ I do not understand why all the mas-saldjis, let them commence a tale as they will, always finish with love and intrigue. One would think that no other wheel set the world in motion. I had scarcely began to relish the adventures of the Khamal and his employer, when out of a fair beginning grew another history of a woman’s folly! Haif, haif — shame, shame! And such a tissue of improbabilities! One Pasha is as good as another; and Inshallah! there is no fear that any dog of a haramzadeh would venture to enter *my* harem. Why then do the fable-mongers spin their brains into silken

threads, to invent fictions which bear no likeness to the realities of life?"

"Life, your Highness;" replied the disguised Greek, reassured by the obtuse self-sufficiency of his host; "is a mere every-day affair, which, without the drapery of imagination, would be too crude and bare to be looked upon with pleasure; and thus the massaldji is compelled to select the ornaments that appear the most likely to embellish it. Where can they be found more readily than in the love and beauty of woman? Are not her smiles the promised light of Paradise, and her care its contemplated recompense? Her weakness is her triumph; her tenderness, the bond that links her to those by whom she is beloved, and on whom she pours out all the treasures of her soul. It is not that the daring foot of either moslem or giaour would indeed venture to profane the harem of a True Believer, (though some assert that such things really have been;) but the fable gives so many opportunities to the narrator of weaving sweet thoughts and fancies into his web of fiction, that he turns as trustingly to the conceit as the pilgrim to the holy caba."

"You talk like a woman :" said the Pasha, with an expression of contempt which was only

tempered by his admiration of the sententious awali ; “ and it is not for me to contend with you. Inshallah ! What is written, is written. The Osmanli do not put their beards into the hands of their wives ; they know better. The Frank women, as I have heard, wander up and down with bold brows and steady steps, and the Prophet only can tell the disorder which must reign in their harems, where there are neither bolts, locks, nor negroes : but, Mashallah ! the Moslems are not dogs ! nor their women hadjis, wandering from land to land, and cramming their brains with a thousand idle and unseemly fancies ! Bashustun ! had I lived in those infidel countries, I should have——”

“ Korkma, Effendimou — fear not : ” said Carimfil Hanoum : “ no one will dare to suspect Saïfula Pasha of permitting the dust of disgrace to be scattered upon his head ; and thus the tales of an idle fable-monger should not chase his humour. The massaldji has done her duty, for she has whiled away two weary hours : but I prefer her zebec to her story, and could almost regret that I cannot, like her, awaken sweet sounds such as those to which we have listened from her rapid fingers.”

“ Alhemdullilah ! when you need music, it

can always be purchased ;” interposed the Satrap abruptly ; “ but the massaldji must not go unrewarded, since you have found amusement in her talent. Remember :” he added, turning to the Aga Baba ; “ when the almè leave the harem, to let this maiden have a purse.”

“ And for myself ;” said the fair Circassian, drawing a handsome ring from her finger ; “ that the awali may not forget her visit to my lord’s harem, I shall reward her with this jewel. Approach, Sèidika, and receive it from my own hand.”

Maniolo polo obeyed with a joy which gave to his movements as he traversed the floor, an impetuosity almost calculated to betray him ; but a warning glance from his sister recalled his caution, and when he bent his knee before the lady, and pressed her hand to his lips in token of his acknowledgment, although he held it longer than perfect good-breeding and respect altogether warranted when their relative situations were considered, this slight deviation from the rules of etiquette was only attributed by the lookers-on to an excess of gratitude.

The mention of remuneration implied the speedy departure of the almè ; and shortly afterwards the Pasha, remarking on the lateness

of the hour, descended from the sofa; and having taken leave of his young wife and her friend, left the apartment, followed by the negroes.

The screen had scarcely fallen behind them when Maniolo polo once more flung himself at the feet of the Circassian. "My life! my soul! my sultana!" he murmured, as she hid her tearful eyes upon his shoulder: "do we indeed meet again, after years of miserable absence? Can it be your brow which rests upon my bosom? your hand that I clasp in mine? Am I still dear to you as when we parted?"

"Maniolo polo;" whispered the agitated Carrimfil: "though it be sin to tell you so, you are to me more than life or light—janum sinindir—my soul is your's—not a day but I have thought of you—not a night but you have been in my dreams—not an hour but I have loved you. The present has been nothing to me—the past full of your memory, and the future one wild hope of looking upon you once again. The hope is accomplished—you are here, and you love me still; and now I ask only to die."

"Talk not of death, katoun—my loved one;"

answered Maniolopolο: “the grave is not for such as thee; or even there happiness might come. Sèverim sèni—I love you: you have been torn from me; and I have suffered hopeless misery for years. When I remember that your youth has been blighted by the passion of a despot, my brain burns, and my pulses quiver—Derdinden oldum beihood—my torment makes me mad! And can you let me continue thus to suffer? Do you condemn me to another banishment which can end only in despair? You know how I have loved you, how I love you still: and you are silent—cruel Carimfil! but the blow is less bitter from your hand than from that of another; unless that other strike me at your feet, that I may expire with your image before my eyes.”

“Alas!” said the trembling beauty; “Y’Allah—in the name of Heaven, what would you ask of me?”

“If your own heart whisper not my meaning;” replied the Greek; “no words of mine could make it welcome. My life and death are in your hands, and you must deal with me as you deem fitting.”

“Maniolopolο:” sobbed the Pasha’s wife; “you break my heart. Have you not been the

one dream of my blighted existence? and do you now speak coldly to me that I may learn to fear as well as love you."

"Astaferallah — Heaven forbid!" said the young Greek: "but think you that I can calmly see my bulbul caged and prisoned, without seeking to burst the bars of its captivity, and to lead it back once more to the wild wood and the free valley of its happiness? We cannot deceive ourselves, Carimfil; we must live for each other, or perish. To save ourselves we must fly together—why do you tremble thus, guzum, my eyes? Do you leave behind you one memory of joy? Oh, no — nor will I think so meanly of you as to believe that your chains have been less heavy, because they are of gold. I thank you for that indignant blush, and that firm pressure of my hand — I knew it — the proud Pasha and his gilded harem will be remembered only with horror, while the green plains and woody monntains of our beloved Circassia will be welcomed as never yet they have been by mortal."

"Would that we were indeed there!" sighed out the timid beauty: "but we are beset by difficulties, surrounded with dangers, watched by jealous eyes—How then can we escape?"

"Carimfil, janum—my soul;" steadily replied the Greek: "all is possible to those who love——"

"And your sister?"

"Think not of me;" said Katinka, as she approached the divan, after having carefully dispersed the attendants of the lady in every direction, and diverted the attention of the almè, who were whispering among themselves gay comments on the prolonged conference of the lovers: "Think not of me—I should but impede your flight, which I would rather strive to secure. But now you must consent to separate, if you will not ruin all by your own imprudence; you, Maniolo polo, we can find whenever we may require your counsel; and you will do well to set about your projects without delay, if your brain be sufficiently free from the cobwebs of passion to enable you to act rationally; and you, Katoun, have need of repose, lest your strength fail in the hour of trial. Nevrestè and your sister almè await you, fair Sëïdika;" she added laughingly; "and should the Aga Baba chance to find you here on his return, his questions may be difficult to answer. Away, then, while you are unsuspected, and still retain your reason."

The remonstrance of Katinka, unpalatable as it was could not be neglected, for even Maniolo polo himself was compelled to admit its propriety ; and after another embrace, and another murmured assurance of eternal constancy, he tore himself from the feet of the beautiful Carimfil, and left the palace with the almè.

On arriving at the Theriarki Tcharchi he hastily flung off his disguise, and bidding a hurried farewell to Nevrestè, in whose hand he placed the purse which had been bestowed on him by the Pasha, he was about to quit the building when he remembered that he had not seen Mherpirwir since he left the harem. The devotion of the gentle girl had touched his heart ; and, even occupied as it was by the image of Carimfil, he could not refuse at least the affection of a brother to the timid maiden who had bruised her own spirit to contribute to his happiness.

When he returned to seek her, the almè had already left the outer room, and had retired to the inner apartments where they deposited the most costly of their ornaments ; and he was about to turn away disappointed, when by the faint light of the solitary and untrimmed lamp which stood in a niche of the discoloured wall, he discovered Mherpirwir, crouched down in one

corner of the saloon, with her arms crossed upon her knees, and her head bent over them. Her lotus crown lay on the ground beside her : but the fever of her brain had withered the flowers, and they were flaccid and faded. Her zebec had a broken string ; and her veil was flung beside it, as though in the wretchedness of the moment she had been reckless and impatient.

Maniolo polo softly advanced : he murmured her name ; and at the sound of his voice the dancing-girl sprang up, and cast herself at his feet :—“ It is in vain to contend with destiny ! ” she whispered hoarsely ; “ I know all that you would tell me ; I am an almè—my passion is a jest—my love a mockery—I know it—I knew it from the first—and I strove against it until the nerves of my heart quivered with agony ! You love another—I know that also ; and she is fair and gentle ; and the world has never yet breathed with its foul fetid breath upon her name, and poisoned her existence. She is worthy of your affection—and yet, in nursing it she becomes even as I am—a banned and blighted thing ! Oh, think of this—it is a frightful truth ; and you close your eyes against it, because you have not courage to look upon it

calmly. Nay, withdraw not thus your hand. I am wild with anguish, and I know not what I say ; yet *you* should pardon me. You, whom I have loved from the first moment that I looked upon you. I have been the by-word of my companions because my heart was shut against the inroads of passion ; now I shall be their scorn, that I have bowed beneath it where it was worse than hopeless."

"Mherpirwir, be calm, be comforted ;" said the Greek soothingly : "it is but a passing fancy ; you are young and beautiful, and ——."

"Do *you* tell me this ?" asked the girl almost sternly ; "You, who have left your home, and dared the very bitterness of death to look upon one whom you loved in your early years ? But you are right, Effendim, you are right : I am young ; and, they tell me, beautiful ; and I must learn to suffer patiently, for the heart does not break at once, and I may have to nurse its anguish for long and bitter years. True, the lip-deep vows of many an idler may tear the wound asunder, and the blood-drops may fall one by one like molten lead, but I shall learn to bear it. So, leave me, Effendim, leave me ; and forget me, unless the

poor and despised dancing-girl may hope to be remembered kindly."

"Listen to me, Mherpirwir :" said Maniolo-polo, as he raised her from the floor, and threw his arm round her trembling form : " You know all my story—I have concealed nothing from you, and I love you as a brother ; your gentle and ready services have lightened my task, and cheered my spirit ; and I would not have you think of me as of an ingrate. But my heart and my hope are yonder"—and he pointed towards the Pasha's palace : " My own safety, even my life, are at stake : and I peril all on that one venture. How, then, could I be worthy of your love, when every thought, every care, every anxiety would be lavished on another ?"

" You are right ;" murmured the maiden, calmly withdrawing herself from his clasp ; " we can be nothing to each other : and mine has been indeed an idle, and a bitter dream. Farewell, Effendim ; I love you ; I shall love you to the end of my existence. Do you remember your ballad at the Tchorbadji's. You can now judge of its truth ; you read my fate, and I am prepared to meet it."

" We cannot part thus—" said Maniolo-polo, deeply moved by her emotion.

"Ne apalum—what can we do?" asked Mherpirwir sadly: "Have you not convinced me that we can be nothing to each other? She to whom you have given your heart loves you even as I do—and for yourself—I feel that you return her tenderness, and to me it will be easier to die than to be despised."

"That were impossible!" earnestly exclaimed the Greek.

"I thank you for the assurance, but I shall not dare the trial. Seek not to see me again. My good Nevrestè will bear with my grief, and it will work its own cure. Farewell, Effendim—merhamet eylè bendènè—have pity on me, and linger no longer. Allah esmarledek—may He take you into his holy keeping; and believe that one heart will beat for you even in the death-hour—the bruised heart of the poor dancing-girl who dared to love you!"

Maniolopolo would have replied with more soothing words, but the almè waited not to hear them. Like a young fawn startled by a distant sound, she bounded from the side of the Greek, and lifting the screen which veiled the entrance of the inner apartment, disappeared in an instant from his sight. He called her in his gentlest tone: "Mherpirwir, guzum! only a moment—

only a word — Y'Allah, in the name of the Prophet! only a moment. Mherpirwir, will you not reply?"

'The echoes of the apartment were the sole answer.

"Nay, then, I will follow you!" said the excited young man; and he had laid his daring hand upon the screen, when it was suddenly raised, and Nevrestè stood before him.

"Ne var — what is this?" she asked sternly; "Have we put our necks into the noose of danger for your sake, young sir, only that your's should be the hand to strain the cord? What means this violence? Sen chok adam! 'tis a bold deed to frighten half a score of women."

"Hear me, mother;" said the agitated Maniolopolò: "on my soul you wrong me! Mherpirwir loves me, and I ——"

"Bak — see!" exclaimed Nevrestè in angry scorn: "an almè no sooner serves a stranger, than he believes that she is his, heart and spirit. Fye on you, young sir! Mherpirwir has been wooed by Beys and nobles, and she has slighted all their vows and protestations. Aye, even with the blind scorn of the world poured out upon her fair young head—a world which judges

only through its own short-sightedness; and which dreams not that the despised and hired dancing-girl has sacrificed her pride and her self-dignity to support an aged mother, and a beggared family ;—even with this foul scorn preying upon her heart, she has been just to herself: and would you — you, whom she has served, be among her enemies? Leave us in peace: we cannot now avail you, and to-morrow we depart.”

“ Mother ;” said Maniolopolo, deeply affected by the honest energy of the old woman : “ I cannot suffer you to bid me farewell with such words as these. Without your timely and generous assistance, I should now have been wretched and hopeless, if not reckless and suspected. How, then, can you attribute to me a falsehearetdness for which I should deserve to suffer death ?”

“ Effendim ;” replied Nevrestè calmly ; “ I do not seek to wrong you, but—you are a Greek. We have served you, and you have liberally rewarded our exertions: there can be no further tie between us. We are never likely to meet again; but should we indeed do so—remember—that for your own sake, and for that of Mherpir-

290 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

wir, we meet as strangers. Oghour ola—Heaven speed you. Our conference is ended."

As she ceased speaking, the old woman made a step backward ; and when the screen again fell, Maniolopoloo was once more alone.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AFTER this very unsatisfactory parting from the almè, Maniolo polo bent his steps to the fendûk where he lodged ; and as he swiftly and cautiously threaded the streets, he revolved a thousand wild and impracticable schemes for the escape of his beloved Carimfil. But his good star forsook him : he could imagine no plausible method of effecting his purpose ; and he at length resolved to endeavour to obtain some rest, and to leave to the morrow the decision at which he found it impossible to arrive in his present excited state.

In the morning he was awoke by the entrance of his servant, who presented to him a small roll of papyrus, with a seal attached to it by a long

lock of silky hair. He raised himself hastily on his cushions, and opened the scroll; the character was that of his sister.

“ I have arranged all ; ” thus was it worded ; “ Your weeping and trembling beauty has at last consented. You will see me no more, but I do not ask you to let this conviction cast a single cloud over your fortune. At our last night’s meeting, you forgot the poor Katinka in a dearer and more absorbing interest ; continue to do so still ; our fates cannot now be blent : our views and hopes are different. I shall not tell you wherefore, for I will not occupy your mind with thoughts of me, and my future life. Make all your arrangements for sudden flight. Remember the skill of Carimfil in guiding her fiery steed over the plains of Circassia — then it was mere sport which urged her on—now she will peril her happiness upon her speed, and it will not fail. Provide for her the costume of a Mameluke ; her motions will thus be free, and her sex unguessed at.

“ To-morrow at day-dawn she will await you at the western gate of the city, near the cemetery ; place the dress which you design for her in the tomb of Hadji Hafiz in the valley ; and receive the last greeting of

“ Your Sister.”

“ By the Saint Panagia !”* said Maniolopolo to himself, as he refolded the missive ; “ Katinka has gained no small share of philosophy by her residence among the Osmanli ! She throws me off as a sultana casts away her slipper ; but she does not fail me in my need, and her plans are clear and speedy. Yet, can I confide in their sufficiency ? — in their prudence ? — I must, for doubt is madness, unless I can suggest a mode of action more sure and safe. Why how now, Stancho ? ” he continued aloud, to a Greek adventurer whom he had taken into his service on his arrival in the city ; “ You have a brow as moody as a papas who has been mulcted of his second trout on a day of fast. What news have you ? ”

“ Oriste, Tchelebis ? — What is your pleasure, sir ? ” asked Constantine, turning suddenly towards his master.

“ Nay, no delay ; ” said Maniolopolo ; “ I am in no mood to brook it ; for I must be up and in the bazar within an hour.”

“ You will do well to reflect ere you walk the city streets again ; ” was the reply of the domestic ; “ for the Selictar-Aga of the Pasha has visited the fendûk this morn-

* Virgin.

ing, and has asked a few questions, having you for their object, which are scarcely palatable."

"How say you?" exclaimed Maniopolo, turning ashy pale. "The Selictar-Aga? Did you see him yourself? Are you sure that it was not the Aga Baba?"

"The Tchelebis knows best what business the chief negro of the Pasha's harem may have to discuss with him;" said Stancho drily; "but the worthy functionary of this morning was none other than the Sword-bearer. The Aga Baba may perhaps follow."

"Silence, fool!" thundered out the young man; "have you no wit save that which exists in deepening difficulty? Speak out — what have you to say?"

"The Tchelebis reminds me;" said the unabashed Stancho; "of the fancy of one of our old authors in the good days when Greece was a great republic, and all her sons were heroes: if I remember rightly, it was that of a man who heated and cooled his pillauf with the same breath; and by St. Nicholas! the Tchelebis first tells me to be silent, and then to speak; and doubtlessly expects to be obeyed in both cases."

"Do not urge me further ;" said Maniolo-polo ; "What did you hear?"

"That the Pasha desired to know the name and nation of every stranger in the city, and that he had learnt the abode of one in this fendûk, about whom he was most solicitous—and, in short, Sir :" added the man, suddenly dropping his flippant tone, and exhibiting some feeling ; "you have been kind and generous to me since I entered your service, and even at some personal risk I have deemed it my duty to apprise you that you are in danger, either in your purse or person — and, for you know best where you have spent the many hours during which I have neither seen nor heard of you—perhaps, in both."

"You are an honest fellow after all, Stancho ;" said his master warmly ; "but your zeal has outrun your reason : my personal safety cannot be endangered, for I have done nothing—"

Maniolo-polo paused suddenly, for his conscience smote him ; and he profited by his pause to spring from his cushions, and prepare himself for the business of the day.

"Tchelebis ;" said the domestic gravely ; "as you seem to persist in your purpose of leaving

the house, I must speak, and you will then act as you deem best. I have reason to know that you are a marked person, and I forewarn you that some evil will happen if you are not cautious. Before you arrived in this city I had suffered poverty and hardship : I was a Greek ; and twice I have undergone the bastinado as a criminal, in order that the Turkish delinquent might escape : in my wretchedness I complained to the Cadi, and he recompensed my faith in his justice with fresh blows and fresh invectives. I laid my head in the dust at the feet of the Pasha, and I was reviled as a raïah and a rascal ; and put forth with hooting and contempt. You are my countryman, and since you have taken me into your service I have been secured alike from want and from persecution ; but you have become yourself a mark for extortion, or it may be, violence. Confide then in me : let me follow your fortunes ; and there is no risk I will not run for you ; the rope is already about my neck, and it can but be tightened an hour or two sooner or later."

"Are you true or a traitor, Constantine?" asked Maniolo polo in very excusable doubt.

The man replied by flinging himself upon his knees, pressing his two forefingers and his thumb

closely together, and making the sign of the cross seven times with extraordinary rapidity : as he called upon the name of the Panagia and half the saints in the calendar to testify to his truth.

" Stancho ;" said his master after the hesitation of a few moments ; " I will trust you, for I have no alternative. If I can escape this day from the tyranny of these rascally Turks, (who will all be d——d in the next world, which is some consolation !) I shall be beyond the city walls early to-morrow morning, and may laugh at their beards. And now, my good Stancho ; what do you advise for to-day ?"

" That you follow me to the terrace ;" replied the quick-witted Greek ; " and remain there for a few moments until I prepare the family of Aneste, whose court it overlooks, to conceal you until the dusk. They are needy and avaricious ; old Dorcas, the mother, would sell you the few teeth which still remain in her head for a handful of paras ; and her husband Alexis has been beaten and kicked until he has learnt to believe that he came into the world for no other purpose. The Virgin help them ! they have another misfortune to contend with in the shape of a pretty daughter, who entertains all the idle

papas* of the parish with sweet words and winning smiles: and the papas, while they look at her, drink the old man's rakè, and eat the old woman's kibauba, which makes things worse; therefore, I can answer for it that the prospect of gaining a few piastres will at once induce them to conceal you until you think fit to leave the city. The little Estafania will prepare your food with her own hands; and I will take care to procure for you any disguise that you may think it proper and expedient to adopt."

"Tell me, Constantine;" said Maniolo polo, fixing his keen eye steadily on his attendant: "how felt you when you were spurned from the gate of the proud Pasha's palace, and cast forth like an infected animal?"

"Do you ask *how* I felt?" demanded Stancho in reply, as he ground his teeth, and instinctively raised his clenched hand to his breast, and grappled idly for a second for the dagger, which, had it not been forbidden to a raïah, he would have worn there: "Was I not a Greek? and had I not been insulted, stricken, and reviled? I swore an oath ——" he paused a moment,

* Greek priests.

while a fierce expression of vindictiveness swept like a storm-cloud across his features: "a deep and wordless oath, that should the hour ever come when the haughty despot might be smitten by my hand, I would drive the dagger home — home — until its poisoned blade had drained his heart!"

"There are wounds deeper than any that a dagger can inflict, my good Stancho;" said Maniolo polo, as he grasped the arm of his excited attendant: "would'st thou assist in smiting the soul of the Satrap, when his person is beyond thy reach?"

"Steadily — unshrinkingly — to have a full and sharp revenge I would peril alike soul and body."

"Then from this hour we are brothers:" said Maniolo polo: "and now listen, and that attentively: for on the next four-and-twenty hours depend our fate."

The attendant seated himself on a low stool near the divan; and with his gaze rivetted on his master, and a bitter smile upon his lips, drank in the whole history of Maniolo polo's love, despair, and renewed hope. The tale was a long one, but it was told with the voluble eloquence of a Greek lover, and it seemed to

the delighted Stancho to have scarcely occupied an hour.

“ And you have really trod the harem floor, and looked upon the pride of the despot’s heart — the hidden pearl of his casket ! May St. Constantine watch over your deathbed ! Oh, that it were my happy fate to tell him this — to watch the flushing of his brow, the grinding of his teeth, the trembling of his limbs — to catch the gasping curse that would fall back upon his heart for want of breath to utter it — to yell into his ears that he has been duped and fooled by a Greek — a raïah — and an infidel ! But I stay your utterance, Tchelebis ; my joy has maddened me — and now what remains to be done ? ”

The emotion of Constantine was too great to be feigned ; and Maniolo polo, Greek though he was, and consequently prepared for guile and falsehood in his countryman, at once perceived that he might safely confide in the bitter hate which Stancho nursed against the Pasha, and which would be satisfied by the injury of which he would become an instrument, more securely than by any sentiment of a less revolting nature. He did not hesitate, therefore, to explain to him the whole project of the lady Carimfil’s escape ;

and when the man left him, it was to provide disguises for the whole party, so soon as he had secured a temporary asylum for his master in the house of Alexis Aneste.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHEN he was left to himself, Maniolopolo did not suffer his thoughts to stray into the future ; the hurried retrospect by which he had imparted to Constantine the incidents of his past life, had brought before him, in all their first freshness and beauty, every little detail connected with his early love which had rendered it the charm and solace of his existence. He recalled every scene amid which he and his beloved Carimfil had wandered together—the river-bank, green with short crisp herbage, and sprinkled with flowers— the forest-path overhung with a dense foliage that cast the sunshine aside, or made it fall flickering through the leaves, painting golden arabesques upon the earth — the rocky height

where, beneath a canopy of jagged stone, with a torrent rushing and boiling not a hundred paces from them, and falling like thunder into the valley, they had sat together, with a peace of heart and a blessedness of spirit forming a beautiful contrast from the wild and savage scene around them. He remembered, too, how they had been parted ; and the months of anguish and despair that had ensued, until the letter of his sister had once more awakened a bright hope within him, and sent him forth a wanderer yet again over the earth.

And the pilgrim had reached his Mecca — the worshipper had knelt before the shrine of his fondest faith — and his heart beat high as he felt the exciting consciousness of his metempsychosis.

But his sister ? Here all was mystery—She might have fled with them ; her bolder temper would have sustained the drooping spirits of the more timid Circassian ; but she had talked of an eternal separation, and had bidden him forget her, or remember her only with cheerfulness, as one over whose fate his own could no longer exercise an influence.

Maniolopolo was still musing on this mysterious renunciation of his only remaining relative,

his once fondly attached sister, when Constantine stole into the room, and bade him follow silently and immediately to the terrace, as he had heard the voice of the Selictar-Aga in the court-yard of the inn, and had seen a couple of the Pasha's guard lounging in the street, like men waiting for a summons.

The young man needed no second warning — the detention, even of an hour, let it terminate as it might, would be ruinous to him at the present juncture ; and he had, during the absence of Stancho, secured all his most valuable property upon his person. That active emissary had also profited by the past hour to warm the hearts of old Dorcas and her spirit-bowed helpmate, by the most ready and efficient means, towards his master : and consequently on their arrival on the terrace beneath which stood the hovel of the sordid couple, they found that every facility had been afforded for their descent.

Having seen his employer safely on his legs, and drawn up and replaced the shawl of his turban which had assisted in his escape, Stancho left the terrace ; and on his return to the chamber of Maniolopolo, found that he had only preceded by five minutes the Selictar-Aga of the Pasha, who entered and inquired with great courtesy after the health and well-being of his

master. The wily attendant replied with a politeness even more exaggerated than that of the Satrap's functionary : and in reply to the next question of his visiter, answered readily that the Effendi was at the hammām,* where he had just left him to seek for a bottle of essence which he had forgotten.

" I was told :" said the Selictar-Aga, with considerable emphasis : " that he yet slept."

" It must have been that lying Israel the Tchibout,† who keeps the door, that so misled your highness :" replied Stancho calmly ; " the dog is for ever blundering in the simplest matters, and overturning the pillauf of his neighbours." And as he spoke, he busied himself in preparing a chibouque for his unwelcome guest, who took possession of the divan with a gravity which shewed that he had no intention of immediately vacating his position.

Coffee followed the pipe, which was prepared at a mangal just without the door of the chamber ; and as the fumes of the tobacco curled from the nostrils of the doughty Sword-bearer, he saw fit to pit his talents at diplomacy against those of the quick-witted and wily

* Public bath.

† Vile Jew.

Greek. It was the combat of the fox and the buffalo.

"I have forgotten the name of your master;" he said with affected unconcern; "nor am I quite certain that I remember whence he comes."

"Your highness may well suffer the first to escape you :" smiled Stancho, as he stood with his arms folded upon his breast, in obsequious attendance upon the man of office ; "for it has so strange and unnatural a sound that I at once abandoned all hope of——"

"But you are yourself a Greek—your tongue betrays you :" interrupted the Selictar-Aga, with what he considered to be a consummate stroke of policy.

"May the ears of my lord never fail him ;" replied the imperturbable Stancho ; devoutly wishing them nailed fast to the wall, beside those of one of his ancient employers, a certain Greek baker who was affixed to his own door for supplying bread in more minute quantities to his customers than was desirable ; "but I cannot speak any Frank dialect."

"And is the stranger whom you serve really a Frank ?" demanded the envoy.

"As truly as that your slave is a Christian ;"

replied Stancho, who had some private doubts of the fact when he remembered that he had twice worn the turban ; and had made a pilgrimage to Mecca, with the produce of which pious journey he had fled to this distant province, and lived comfortably among his countrymen until he had lavished his ill-gotten gains ; “ As truly as that your slave is a Christian.”

“ La illaha illallah — there is but one Allah ! and you are an Infidel, and less than a dog before the eyes of the blessed Prophet ;” said the Sword-bearer, as he gravely smoothed down his beard, and the Greek bowed meekly beneath the taunt ; “ I had heard that the traveller was your countryman.”

Stancho replied by a second negative.

“ I am weary of the quiet of this tranquil city :” pursued the Selictar-Aga condescendingly ; “ and I love to talk with strangers of the lands through which they have passed ; of the Rustems* of their own countries ; and of the wonders that they have seen. When will the Effendi your master return from the hammām ? I would converse with him.”

“ He bade me hasten with the essence ;” re-

* Heroes.

plied Stancho : “ and prepare his horse for two hours hence. These Franks, your highness, ever ride like Tatars when they return from the bath, instead of quietly smoking or sleeping like good Moslems.”

“ Mashallah ! they do well :” said the Sword-bearer sententiously ; “ they can smoke and sleep on their divans in their own countries, where men run about at mid-day with paper-lanterns, or grope their way in partial darkness. Shekiur Allah—to His name be all praise ! they come here to see the sun, and they do well to take their fill of it while they can — I have said it.”

“ Janum sinindir — my soul is your’s :” said the Greek, in affected admiration of the erudition of his companion ; “ What are they but dogs, and the fathers of dogs— And what wills my lord that I should say to the Effendi ?”

The Selictar-Aga hesitated for a moment, and then exclaimed : “ Wallah billah — by the Prophet ! I must know this Frank : he is surely a hakeem,* and I would ask his counsel ; but enough for to-day. Tell him that I will dip my fingers into his pillauf to-morrow at the

* Doctor.

evening meal : to-day I have other projects : but let him await my coming as I have said, for I shall be here without fail ; and perchance I may turn upon him the light of the Pasha's countenance."

" Allah esmarladek ;" murmured the Greek submissively : " he will surely be on the threshold at the appointed hour."

" It will be well for both of you that it should be so :" said the Selictar-Aga, as he descended from the sofa, and thrust his feet into his slippers to depart ; and there was something sinister in his manner of uttering the remark which would have satisfied Stancho, had he ever entertained a doubt of the fact, that the intentions of the Sword-bearer and his master were anything but friendly to Maniolopolis.

" The sapient Turk is as slow-witted as a tortoise," he muttered to himself as the portly functionary slowly descended the stair, and mounted his over-fed horse, which was held by a couple of fine-looking serudjes* in the court of the fendük : " we shall be galloping over sand before he descends to the city ! Saint Nicholas, what a race to govern a land like

* Grooms.

310 THE ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

this, and to bow the neck of the Christian—But the day will come—the day will come——” and with this vague, though apparently consolatory ejaculation, he bowed low as the grave Osmanli rode slowly away without deigning to acknowledge his salutation.

CHAPTER XXV.

“KARA!” shouted the Aga Baba of Saïfula Pasha to one of the negro guard of the harem, about an hour before dawn the following morning, as they both lay upon their cushions in an anti-room off the great gallery, with their unsheathed scymitars beside them; “Kara—ne var—what is that?—I heard a noise.”

“The wind in the cedar-trees outside the casement, perhaps; or that accursed cat that the spoiled Greek woman chooses to fondle, because she knows that I loathe the beast;” was the sulky answer: “Aye, I knew it;” he continued, as a second rustling in the gallery caused the Aga Baba to raise himself on his elbow to listen; “there it goes over the balus-

trade of the gallery, leaping into the moonlight; Allah bela versin — may misfortune overtake it! To be awakened from a dream of home and liberty by an accursed cat — Amān, 'tis too much!" And with a deep sigh, the negro turned his face from the door, and prepared to sleep again; an example which his superior, after listening for another moment and suffering no further interruption, very judiciously followed.

The momentary disturbance had, however, acted so powerfully on the nerves of the zealous Aga Baba, that he slept only to dream that all the women of the harem were escaping over the galleries, and dancing sarabands in the moonlight, where a hundred profane eyes were looking on them; and when at last his master's fair and favourite wife appeared before him, led into the very circle of the mazy figure by the stately Greek slave, the dreamer awoke with a groan that in an instant startled him into a perfect consciousness of the cause of this terrific vision; and dreading lest it might not indeed have been the cat which roused him from his first slumber, he determined to satisfy himself that all was quiet in the harem; and accordingly he made the tour of the apartments, tried the

doors, and startled more than one of the fair inmates, who were not slow in applying to him sundry epithets by no means flattering to his personal vanity.

Reassured by the result of his survey, the Aga Baba once more resigned himself to sleep; but he might more safely have trusted to his first suspicion; for the favourite cat of Katinka had slumbered peacefully on a cushion throughout the whole night; and nevertheless the sounds upon the gallery had been no illusion of a half-awakened fancy.

When the ladies of the harem came forth one by one from their chambers, each asked the other to account for the non-appearance of the beautiful Circassian and her friend; and a long hour went by before the small hand of Katinka was seen drawing aside the screen that veiled the apartment which she shared with Carimfil. Jests and questions welcomed her; but she did not return the pleasantries of her companions as she was accustomed to do; and pressing her finger on her lip, she besought quiet for her friend, who was indisposed and required rest.

In an instant all was anxiety and solicitude; a thousand maladies were enumerated, and as many remedies suggested; but Katinka put all

proffers of service steadily aside ; and only enjoining quiet, returned, as she affirmed, to watch beside the invalid.

The day wore on : the shadows grew shorter and shorter — it was noon : again they fell upon the earth, and stretched slowly to greater length, like the limbs of a slumbering giant. The fair inmates of the harem had left the bath ; had slept through the hot hours upon their flower-sprinkled cushions ; and were wandering through the palace-gardens : it was verging towards sunset : and still the Greek girl remained in the closed apartment, whence no sound issued save that of her light foot as she occasionally moved across the floor.

Twice the Aga Baba beat upon the door, and declared his intention to enter ; but each time he was deterred by a prolonged “ H-u-s-h ! ” from the subdued voice of Katinka. He grew restless and unquiet, and walked through the harem, murmuring a few words to himself in a low tone, of which “ hakeem ” and “ Pasha ” were alone audible. Occasionally he bent his ear, and listened, as he stopped before the embroidered screen which veiled the door of the apartment : but all was still ; and at length his restlessness grew into suspicion, and without any

preliminary warning, he softly drew back one of the battants, and entered.

On a pile of satin cushions immediately beneath one of the windows lay a lovely form, but the face was hidden from the officious intruder by a profusion of long glossy hair, and by an arm of dazzling whiteness which was flung across the face. The couch of the Greek girl had not been occupied, for the silver-fringed sheet was smoothly laid back as it had been left by the attendant slaves on the preceding evening; and when the Aga-Baba looked round to inquire from the fair Katinka the cause of this unnecessary vigil, he found that, save the sleeping beauty on the cushions, he was alone. In an instant the truth flashed upon him. He had been duped! Mischief had been at work in the harem, and his vigilance had slumbered! He sprang towards the low couch: he grasped the rounded arm: he gazed into the eyes that met his, with an expression half mockery and half apprehension; and his breath failed, and his knees smote together as he beheld—Katinka!

“And the lady Carimfil—the sosun of the Pasha—the wife of his highness”—he gasped out; “where is she?”

“Ne bilirim—what do I know?” asked the

wily Greek in reply : “ I have slept ; and I dreamt that she had escaped—and—”

“ Wallah billah — by the Prophet ! I believe that you are laughing at my beard ;” muttered the negro from between his clenched teeth : “ but have a care ! proud slave, have a care—there are deep waves, strong cords, and sharp blades within reach of a ready arm. Beware lest——”

“ Slave in your teeth, vile tool of a dishonoured master !” exclaimed the Greek girl springing to her feet, and extending her clenched hand in haughty menace ; her long hair streaming over her shoulders and falling far below her waist, and her slight frame trembling with passion : “ Slave in your teeth, foul miscreant ! who pressed the pillow of selfish indulgence when you should have looked to the interests of your too trusting master ! Where were you, and your still more abject followers, when the giaour stole upon the privacy of the harem, and wiled the dove from her nest ? Where were you when the eagle swooped, that you heard not his scream, that you marked not the shadow of his wings ? Off, to your injured lord, and tell him how doughtily you have done your duty.”

"Lahnet be Sheitan—curse on the devil, and on thee, his handmaiden!" exclaimed the Aga Baba, undaunted by this display of feminine energy: "Listen to me, woman! Do you know the price of this night's work?" and he drew closer to her, and hissed out in a voice that was unearthly in its shrillness; "Can you estimate the penalty of your treachery. I was her guardian, and my arm and my weapon were vowed to her security—you were her companion; you were beside her sleeping and waking—our peril is equal—one of us two must die."

"Malumumdr—I know it;" was the calm and unshinking answer; "and I can tell thee even more than this. The contest may seem to be an unequal one—a woman is pitted against an Aga Baba—and yet"—and she laughed a low and bitter laugh: "the case is not so desperate, when the woman is young, beautiful, and a Greek. This neck;" and as she spoke, she grasped it with her slender fingers; "was never meant for the bowstring."

"Bakalum—we shall see!" growled the enraged negro.

"We waste time;" added the fearless Katinka; "the Pasha is judge between us: I

have no words to lavish on a slave like thee." And the astonished functionary found himself urged to the very measure with which he hoped to have brought the trembling Greek girl quailing to his feet.

"Allah kerim;" he muttered as he turned away trembling with dissembled rage; "this tigress must be crushed, or I am a lost man!"

But it was far more easy for the spirit-stricken Aga Baba to quit the presence of the Medusa-like beauty, than to present himself in that of the Pasha. What account could he give of his own blindness? As he asked himself the question, he remembered the episode of the sleepy negro, who had amused him with the conceit of the cat leaping into the moonlight; and being bewildered as to the next step which it was necessary for him to take in order to secure his own safety, he determined to calm his brain, and to collect his ideas by applying the bastinado to the unlucky subordinate, whose indolence had conducted in so eminent a degree to the catastrophe of the night.

"Anna sena, baba sena—I will destroy his father and mother;" he muttered, as he ground his teeth until his jaws ached with the violence of their contact; "When the bowstring comes to

my neck, if come it must, I shall at least know that he has not quite escaped —But that woman —that devil—why did I shrink before her gaze when it will so soon be turned on me in supplication ? Why did I quail beneath her voice, which will so soon expire in a smothered shriek ? Inshallah ! I felt as though I withered beneath the influence of the Evil Eye."

A few more moments elapsed, and then a stifled groan was heard, and a wailing cry; a few heavy blows, a fall, and the dragging of painful footsteps, which seemed as though the agony of a lifetime pressed them into the earth.

The Aga Baba was soothed for the moment by this seasonable exercise of his authority ; but only for a moment ; for as the maimed negro crawled away, the recollection of his ill-starred position returned upon him with startling distinctness ; and he felt as though his head was already rolling at the feet of the incensed and injured Pasha.

What was to be done ? His errand, though death-fraught, must be executed at once—True, he was to contend only against a woman ; but he could not conceal from himself that there was about her an energy which would struggle even

to the death ; and that she was conscious of her advantage.

The brute force was on his side ; but the subtlety of spirit, the power of thought, the majesty of mind were all in arms for her. The peace-loving and luxurious Pasha, who had been long accustomed to her presence, and by no means insensible to her excelling beauty, bereft as he was of his fair wife, and threatened by an isolation of heart from which he would naturally shrink with a very pardonable selfishness in the first moment of his bereavement, would probably yield to the spell of her impassioned eloquence—and where would he then seek the victim ?

The head of the Aga Baba sank upon his breast, and his heart heaved. He could not put the answer prompted by his own reason into words.

With these reflections was he accompanied through the gallery of the harem, to the salem-liék ; and no brighter hope had suggested itself even when he stood before the veiled door of the Satrap's private apartment. How he wished at that moment that he had been a less privileged intruder, that thus a few more instants of delay might have been his, while the ceremonies of his introduction to the presence of the Pasha were

performed ; but, alas ! the wish was idle ; and with the eye of every loiterer in the anteroom upon him, he was compelled at once to lift the screen, to pass the portal, and to stand before his master.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"How now, Ashref;" said the Pasha, as the trembling Aga Baba bowed down before him ; "Ne istersiniz—what brings you here ? —Nay, by my father's beard ! you tremble—you avoid my eye—Speak, wretch—what of my wife? what of my harem?"

In the energy of the moment, the Satrap had risen from the sofa ; and as he uttered the last eager question, he stood within a few paces of the shrinking slave.

"May my lord live to see the beard of his grandson white with years !" gasped out the Aga Baba ; "A wolf has stolen into the fold, or a lamb has strayed—Is not the world free for my lord the Pasha? Are not all the beauties of the earth at his disposal? Can he not——"

"Enough of this ;" said the Satrap with a frightful calmness which was more appalling than the fiercest burst of passion ; "Say your errand without metaphor or preface ; words are idle ; and I am in no humour to be fooled."

The negro sank upon his knees ; "Amān, amān — mercy, mercy — the lady Carimfil has fled ——"

Words have no power to paint the transport of the Pasha ; the strength of half a dozen men seemed to have passed into his arm ; he lifted the unresisting negro from the floor, and then hurled him back, with a fury that threatened the dislocation of every trembling limb ; he spurned him as he grovelled in the dust ; and his fingers clutched the hilt of his handjar, as though his vengeance almost overcame his prudence, and that he thirsted to destroy him with the remainder of his secret still unsaid. But the first moment of phrenzied anguish over, he mastered the overwhelming passion — he was sure of his victim ; and he had yet much to learn. A flood of mingled memories pressed upon his brain ; and when he again spoke, his voice was hollow and husky, like that of one whose lips have long been sealed.

The tale was soon told ; nor did the Satrap

interrupt it by a word or a gesture, until the wily Ashref, in order to divert his vengeance into another channel, expatiated on the treachery of Katinka, who had not only favoured the flight of the lost beauty, but cunningly concealed it until pursuit was hopeless.

“ And she knew it ! The false Greek knew that she was to fly from me ! ” he then burst forth : “ May all her dastard nation be withered for her sake ! Was it for this that I suffered her dark shadow to rest beside the light of my eyes ; and her cunning words to conjure me into temporary forgetfulness of my own soul ? — But it is not yet too late for vengeance ! Follow me, false slave ! You shall not die alone if Saïfula Pasha lives to cross once more the threshold of his harem .”

As he spoke, the Pasha strode haughtily through the chamber, and passed out without casting a backward glance upon the fainting wretch who passively followed with death already in his heart.

When the Pasha reached the great hall, whence the apartments of the women opened right and left, he found it deserted. The affrighted slaves, anxious to escape the first outbreak of his vengeance, had hastily concealed

themselves on his approach ; but when he stood upon the threshold of the chamber where he had last beheld his lost Carimfil, he met the proud and unshrinking eye of the Greek girl who was standing in the centre of the floor.

A bitter and a threatful malediction rose to the lips of the Pasha ; but the calm, assured, and thrilling gaze of those deep wild eyes arrested it in the utterance ; and he had advanced a pace or two into the room in silence, when the low sweet voice of the maiden broke the spell.

“ Saïfula Pasha, the lord of a powerful province, is come to seek from the captured Kattinka tidings of his wife—” she said, in as undisturbed a tone as though she knew not that the soul of her listener shook with anguish, and that his heart bled from a fresh and gaping wound ; “ Let him rather ask the pampered slave who crouches close behind him, and to whom he had confided the safety of his harem, and his own honour ! The eye slumbered that should have watched — the ear was sealed that should have listened — the hand was nerveless for whose clasp the naked scymitar had been prepared — and while that traitor lives, the name of Saïfula Pasha will be a mark for scorn. What has the coward whispered to his master ? That

the Greek girl, who was purchased by his gold, cherished by his care, consoled in her bondage by his gentleness, had leagued with a false and unloving wife to stab him as he slept — Nay, Speak not, wretch ! ” she exclaimed haughtily, as the Aga Baba was about to make another desperate effort at self-preservation, while the Pasha remained thralled and overawed by an energy such as he had never before beheld : “ speak not, lest thy false tongue be torn from between thy lying lips, and flung to the dogs who would turn away revolted by such foul garbage—” and then, as though the interruption had failed to break the chain of her ideas, she continued — “ But did the dastard murmur to his lord that the exiled maiden who had eaten of his bread, and rested beneath his roof, spurned at the efforts that were made to lead her also to abandon her princely master ? Did he tell how she withstood the prayers and tears of the fugitive, and how she mocked at the assurance that she would be the victim of another’s crime, and become the sacrifice of her own devotion ? If he told this also, let him stand forth, and bear witness that his eye, his ear, and his arm were employed in the service of his lord : but if he knew nothing of the struggle between the lost one and her

early friend, then let him pay the price of his supineness."

" Mashallah ! " murmured the bewildered Pasha, quivering with mingled rage, anguish, and admiration ; " he is a false slave, and he shall die the death ! "

" Away with him then at once !" continued the Greek girl ; " his breath pollutes the chamber, and his vile body cumbers the earth." And without waiting the acquiescence of the Satrap, she clapped her hands, and two negroes instantly obeyed the summons.

A few brief words from the Pasha, who was startled into instant compliance with the unyielding will of the maiden ; and whose weak nature was overwhelmed by the lava-flood of passion that poured from her quivering lips ; decided the fate of the wretched Aga Baba, who was borne from the apartment, shrieking out his despair with all the shrill terror of a woman.

As the screen fell behind the executioners and their victim, Katinka flung herself wildly upon her knees before the Pasha ; every trace of haughtiness had vanished from her brow — her eyes had lost their light, and trembled through a sea of tears ; her head was bowed upon her heaving bosom, and she was all the woman.

"Look on me, my lord;" she whispered, as she clasped the hem of his robe with her small fair hands: "look on me, and listen to me, ere you condemn me — I do not mean to death — I care not for it — I do not fear it — but to the hopeless anguish of your displeasure. Am I to blame that the lost one loved you not? — that she had poured the sherbet of affection over the flowers of paradise before she entered your harem? and that she nursed the memory of her first love until it grew into dishonour? — Am I to blame?" she continued in a yet fainter murmur, as the Pasha was about to interrupt her; "am I to blame that my heart clung where her's had failed to find a resting-place? that, yielding to a passion I had no longer the power to controul, I entered madly into a plot which was to ensure the absence of her who hid from me the sun of my existence? I have done — sen ektiar der — you are the master; I ask for no mercy save that which your heart may offer, by paying back the tenderness of mine."

The astonished Pasha hesitated for a moment, during which he looked down upon the fair young creature before him. She was very beautiful, and Carimfil was gone: she loved him — for it never occurred to him to doubt the fact;

and there is a charm in novelty which deepens loveliness a hundred fold : but Saïfula Pasha was a rigid Moslem, and the maiden was a Greek ; and with characteristic stolidity, he replied to her passionate appeal by a stammering allusion to her apostacy.

The lip of the girl curled in scorn, but only for an instant ; the stake on which she had perilled her life was not to be lightly lost ; and rising from her knees, her dark eyes flashing once more with the intense light that seemed to burn into the soul, she exclaimed reproachfully : “ And has Saïfula Pasha yet to learn that all is easy to those who love ? Shall not his faith be mine ? his will be my law ? and his greatness my glory ? ”

“ Inshallah ! ” said the Satrap, overcome by the energetic eloquence of his companion ; “ What can I say ? I am alone, and my heart is heavy. How can I pass my days if my harem is desolate ! Allah kerim ! It shall be as you have said. I shall offer one soul to the Prophet — one convert to the true faith. Bèyaz, I will forget the falsehood of which I have been the victim — severim sèni — I love you — but — you must cease to be a Giaour.”

“ Allah il Allah. Mahomet resoul Allah ! ”

said Katinka in a firm voice, and without the hesitation of a second ; “ when the Imāum claims me, I am ready.”

“ St. Estafania be my witness ;” murmured the girl to herself, as the Pasha shortly afterwards left the harem : “ I will hang the chains that have so long pressed down my own spirit upon the soul of that coward-hearted despot, or the blood that was spilt at Scio shall be on my head ! Love ! 'tis a madman's dream — but power, wealth, and a proud name, are the tripod on which true happiness is based — I have toiled for it — humbled my haughty spirit to obtain it — bent my neck to the oppressive yoke, and my lip to the ready lie — and these are my wages — ” and she laughed bitterly as she flung back the lid of an inlaid casket in which were contained the costly jewels that the Circassian had abandoned in her flight. “ These — and the selfish passion of the Moslem ! ”

THE END.

LONDON :
P. SHOBERL, JUN., 51, RUPERT-STREET, HAYMARKET.

